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COMPUTER +video GAMES

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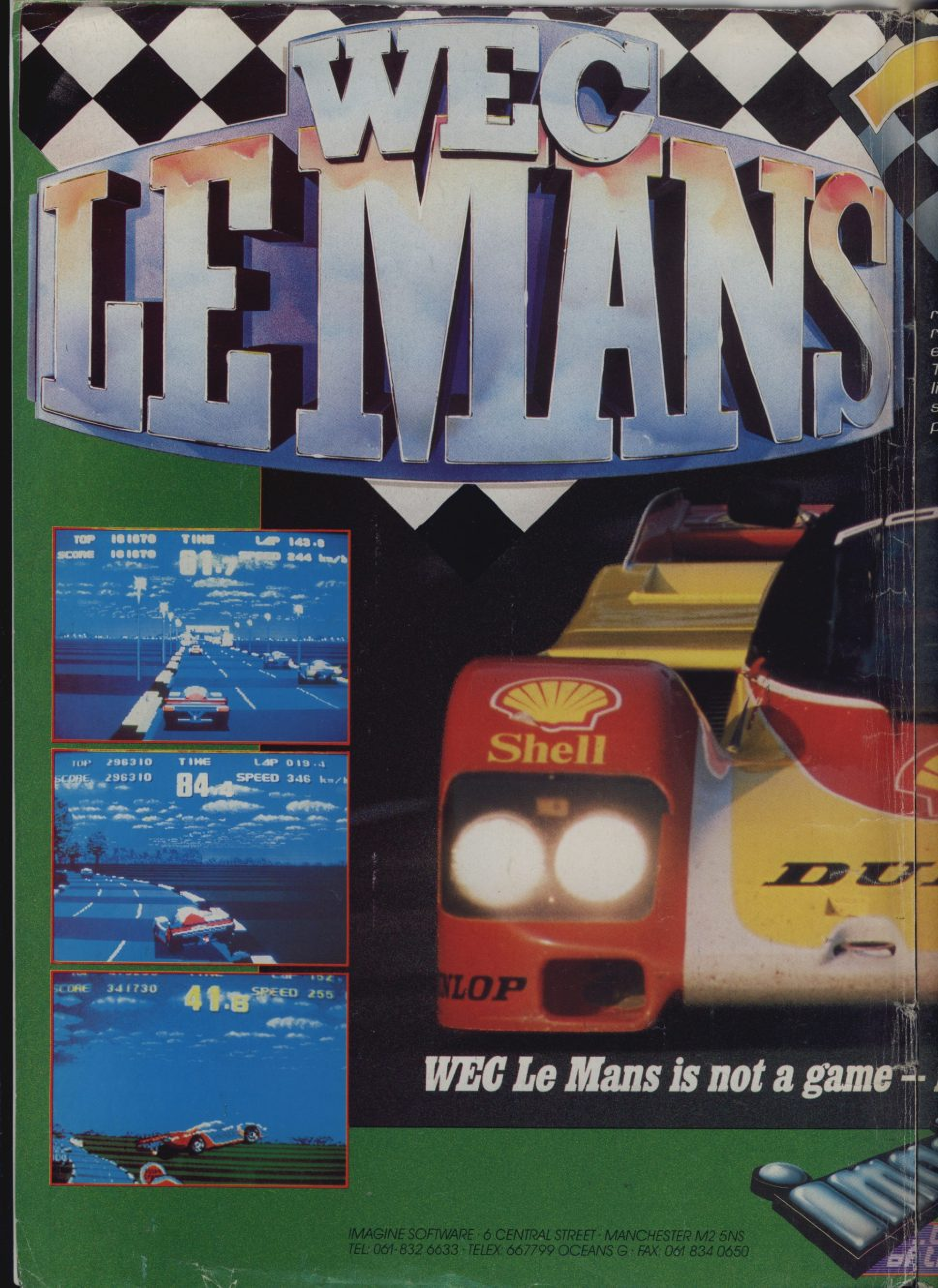
THE 16-BIT SEGA UNVEILED

LAND OF THE RISING CONSOLE

C+VG REPORTS FROM JAPAN ON THE NINTENDO AND PC ENGINE

REVIEWED: RAMBO III, GUERILLA WAR, FALCON ST, NEUROMANCER, EXPLODING FIST+

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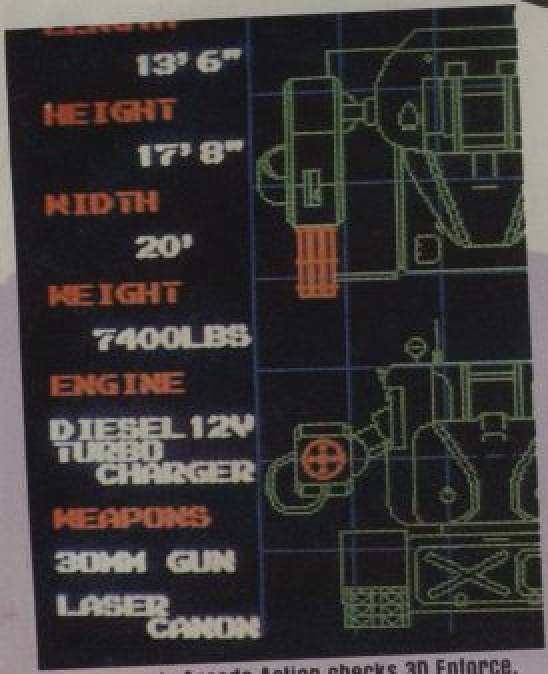


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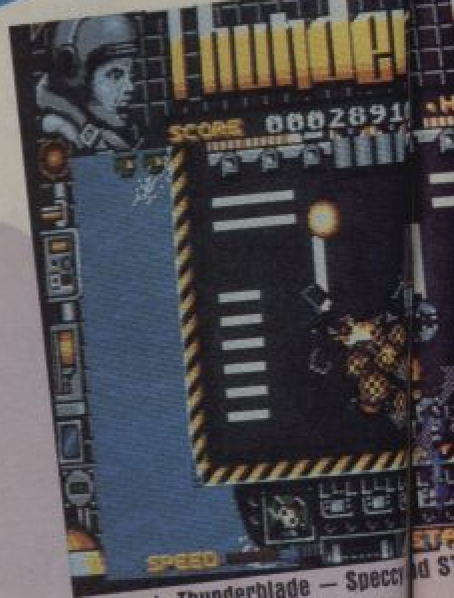
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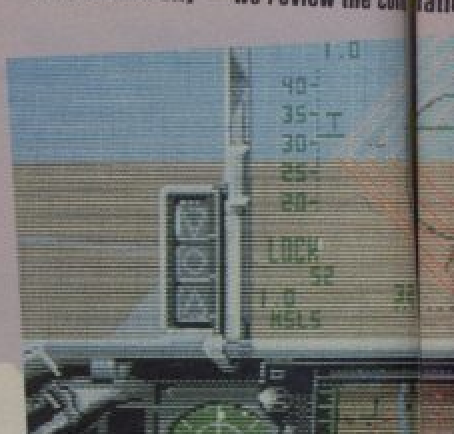
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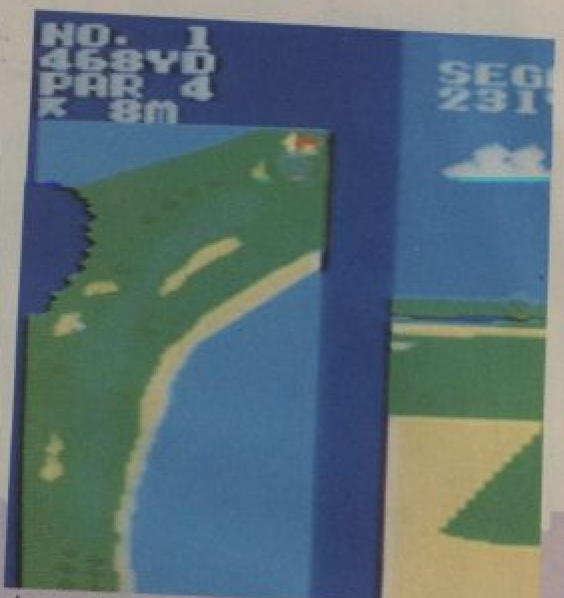
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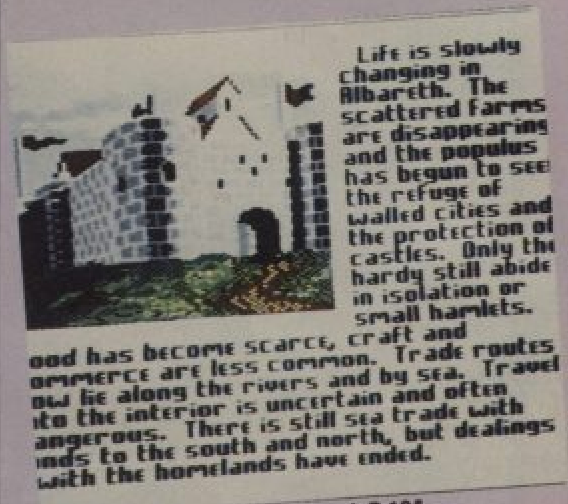
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108,892 (Jan-June 1988).



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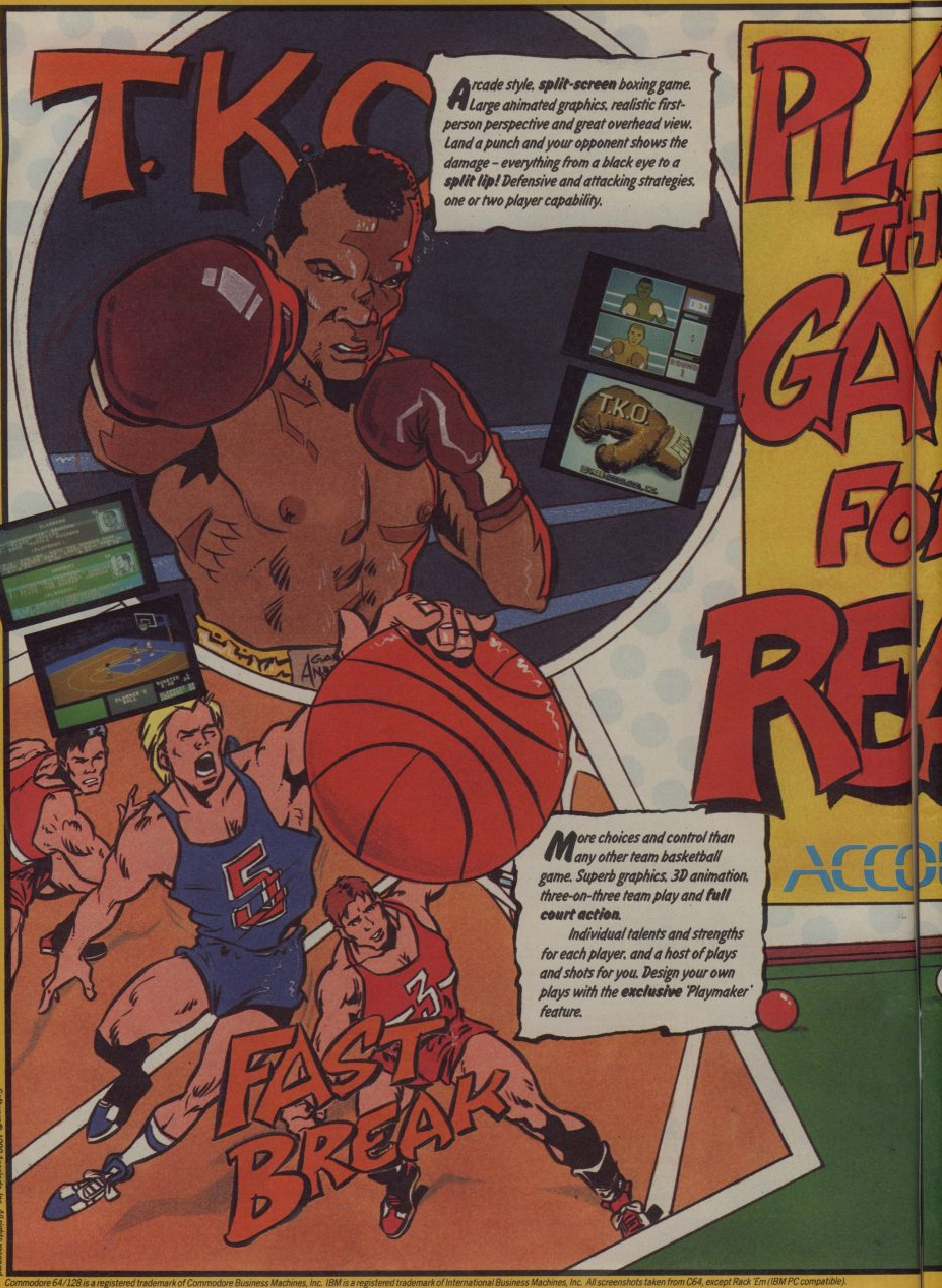
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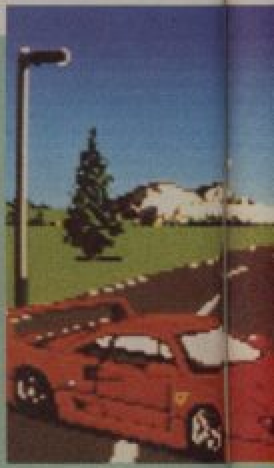

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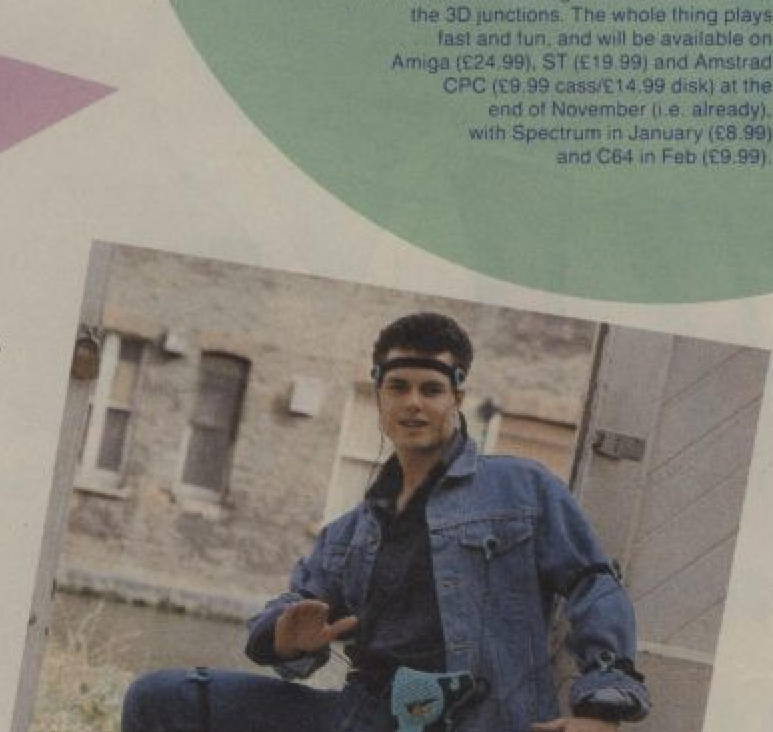
Touched on briefly in our Paris show report last issue, **Crazy Cars II** from French software house Titus is well worth a second look. You race a very nice Ferrari F-40 sprite across four American states ostensively in pursuit of corrupt policemen running a stolen car racket, though it smacks to us of just a lousy excuse to drive at 200mph! You can plan your route from on screen maps, though the shortest tend to have the highest level of police presence – both honest John good-guy bobbies, and the nasty, snivelling corrupt variety.

Your Ferrari is equipped with a rather unlikely sounding radar device which is able to tell a police road block from a tree at half a mile – so you may be forced to make a slight detour down one of the 3D junctions. The whole thing plays fast and fun, and will be available on Amiga (£24.99), ST (£19.99) and Amstrad CPC (£9.99 cass/£14.99 disk) at the end of November (i.e. already), with Spectrum in January (£8.99) and C64 in Feb (£9.99).

Fashion Victim

It must be difficult to look cool when you're covered in wires and speakers and things, but Startel seem to reckon their new Body Rap product is all the rage with hip and trendy American street kids. Just goes to prove what we at C + VG have always said about the conspicuous American lack of style.

But seriously folks . . . Body Rap is a neat little gizmo, if guaranteed to cause a few boxed ears over Christmas. Having sprogs running around wired for sound like this is bound to fray a few parental tempers. What happens is that you hit the various sound pads clipped or strapped to your body with other bits of your anatomy, with each giving a different synthesised sound: bass drum, snare, cymbal etc. With practice it is claimed that you can create quite complex rhythms – the greater your skills as a contortionist, the better. Or, like us here at C + VG, you can just create an awful racket in "tune" with your favourite tracks. Cost is £39.99 in red, white or turquoise, but we have four to give away to lucky punters. The questions are as simple as you are likely to look should you dare wear the thing.









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Charts



Crazy Cars II

Global Strategy

Expect to see from Rainbow Arts through US Gold is **Spherical**, a Gauntlet clone. As player you look down on over 100 levels as you guide your wizard character through hordes of nasties. You guide a sphere home safely through all dangers picking up extra magical abilities and powers along the way. Like Gauntlet there is a two player option that should make things considerably more fun, though sadly not the four player device that lost us so many man-hours here at C+VG playing Gauntlet 2 a few months back.





Ultimate evil here takes the form of a dragon to be whipped – we are promised it will be huge! – though that doesn't answer the important question: just what is a "sphere" meant to be, anyhow? Like most German products, it will be for C64, ST, Amiga and IBM compats, alongside sister product **The Game,** a space battle spectacular.

Eliminator



Newest 16 bit release from games author John Phillips – who you may remember from Nebulus – is **The Eliminator,** a Hewson release. A space racing game for ST and Amiga, it features 3D graphics and great dollops of action.



Cop This



Technocope from Gremlin is a combination car race/shoot 'em up scheduled for the very tail end of '88. These Spectrum screen shots show both the high tech sports car driving sequences, and the foot-bound sequences where you must try and stalk and capture your felon. The game will be available in Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Amiga, ST and Amstrad PC versions, released in the post Christmas blockbuster dead zone.

ATARI ST TOP TEN

1	[illegible] Infogrames
2	Elite – Firebird
3	Menace – Psyclapse
4	STOS Game Creator – mandarin
5	1943 – US Gold
6	Star Glider 2 – Rainbird
7	Triad – Triad
8	Night Raider – Gremlin Graphics
9	Eliminator – Hewson
10	Daley Thompson's Olymp. Chall.

Hostages goes straight in at number one, with Menace, 1943, Triad and Eliminator all new entries. The combined 16 bit market share now stands at 10%.

ALL FORMATS COMBINED TOP TEN

1	Last Ninja 2 – System 3
2	Joe Blade 2 – players
3	Bomb Jack – Encore
4	Footballer of the year – Kixx
5	Commando – Encore
6	Football Manager 2 – Addictive
7	Int. Rugby sim – Code Masters
8	D. T'son's Olymp. Chall. – Ocean
9	Gauntlet – Kixx
10	Air Wolf – Encore

Last Ninja 2 retains the top spot, though not for much longer it would seem. The Amstrad version certainly lost ground this month. Armalyte is looking good as a future tip for the top in 64 terms at least.

AMIGA TOP FIVE

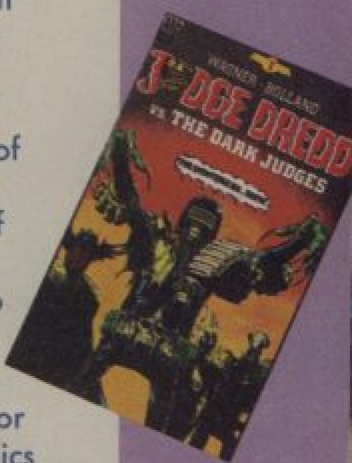
1	Rocket Ranger – Mirrorsoft
2	Battle Chess – Electronic Arts
3	Interceptor – Electronic Arts
4	Menace – Psyclapse
5	Star Glider 2 – Rainbird

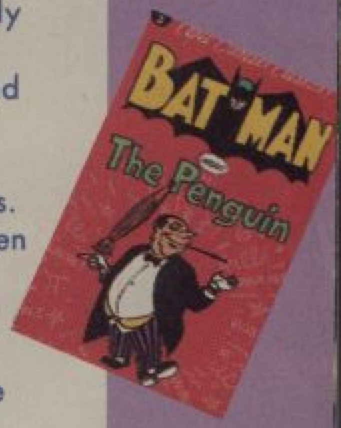
The thirty quid Rocket Ranger steps up one place to number one, while E.A. do well and Menace enters at number 4.

Fax

Paperback Dredd

For those that balk at paying out a fiver foı a collection of old 2000 A.D. strips, Titan books have introduced a second line of reprints reflecting comics as they used to be: cheap and throwaway. At least that was the idea – pocket sized collections of famous incidents from Mega-city history, and to compliment them a parallel line of Bat-classics – and all for pocket money prices. Thing is, paperback books are no longer all that cheap – these weigh in at £2.95 a throw – so the idea may be a bit of a non-starter, unless they're for people ashamed to be seen reading comics in public places. Still, they do make trendy little volumes. Judge Dredd vs the Dark Judges features some lovely Brian Bolland artwork, and both the Otto Sump and Fatties books feature some of the most grotesquely hilarious characters in comics. The caped crusader camp classics are even better though – early tales of Batman fighting the Joker, the Penguin and other such crazies. We love 'em to death, and they've nice covers too – a pleasant little way to blow three quid.





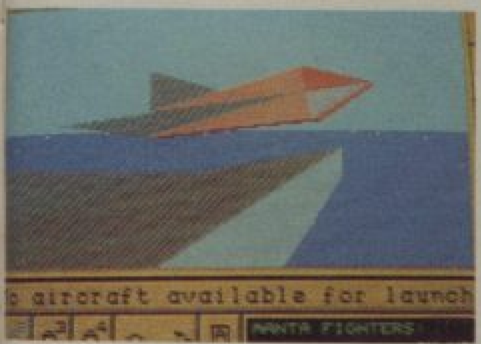
Tilt Magazine Awards

Fax is getting all globetrotting these days. After jet setting to Paris for the show last ish, we were back in the City of Lights just recently to check out the French equivalent of our own "Golden Joysticks" awards. Top froggie mag TILT organise some of the best recognised awards on that side of the channel, and it is interesting to see just how strongly British software houses feature. Paula Byrne, the head of Telecomsoft whose labels Firebird and Rainbird showed especially strongly, was there at the presentation ceremony. She told Fax: "We are very happy and proud to be so well received in France."

If you will forgive Fax for occasionally mistranslating the names of some of the categories, we'll have a closer look at the finders, keepers, losers weepers . . .





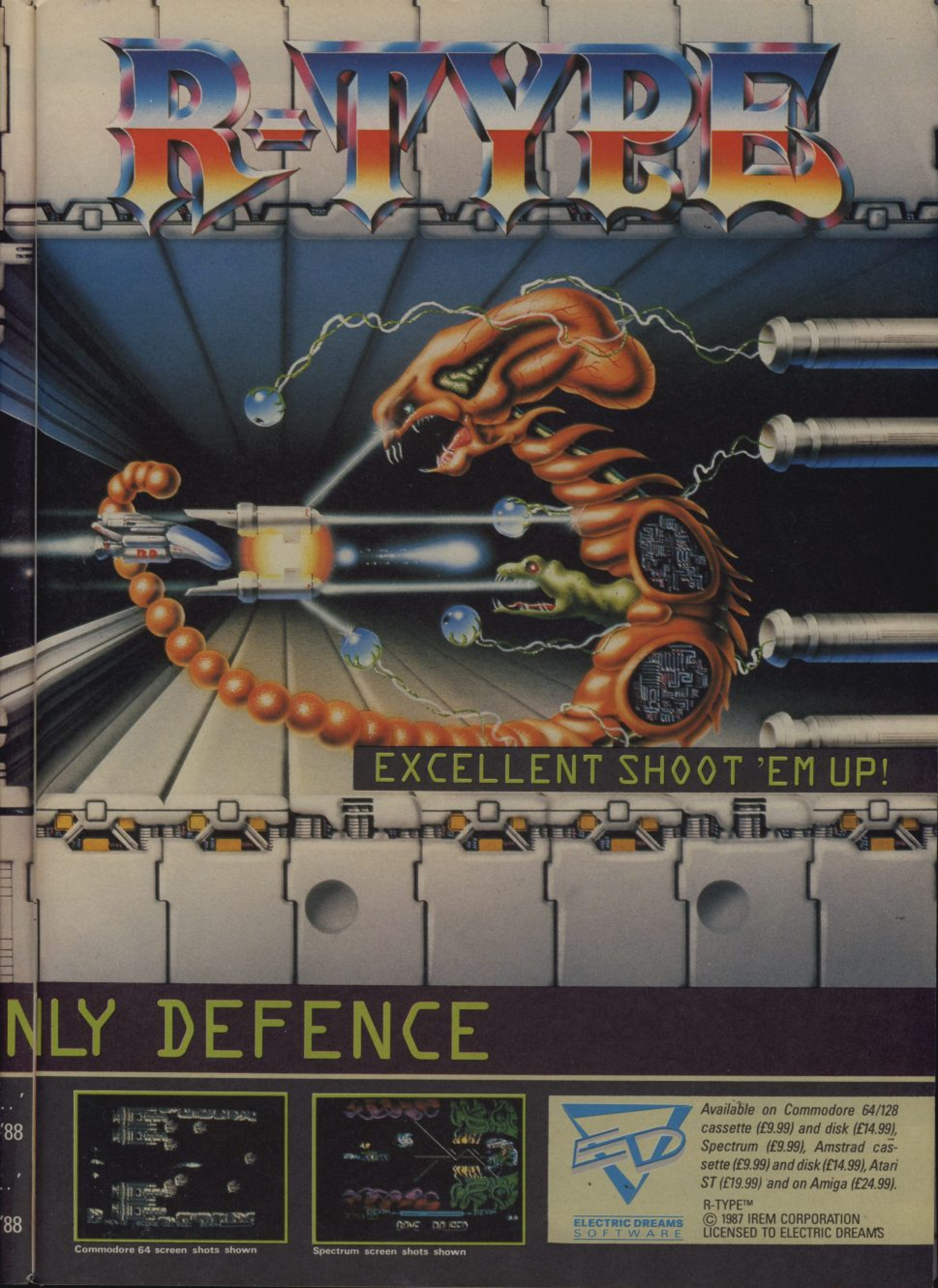


Best graphics: Rocket Ranger (Cinemaware).
Best animation: Virus (Firebird).
Best strategy: Tetris (Mirrorsoft).
Atmospheric soundtrack: Dungeon Master (FTL).
Best shoot 'em up: Star Ray (Logotron).
Arcade adaptation: Operation Wolf (Ocean). Buggy Boy (Elite).
Sports simulation: Porsche Turbo Cup (Loriciels).
Arcade action game: Barbarian 2 (Palace).
Original action game: Carrier Command (Rainbird). Tetris (Mirrorsoft).
Action game: Nebulus (Hewson).
Best educational: Rody et Mastico (Lankhor).
Best adventure in English language: Corruption (Rainbird).
Best adventure in French language: L'arche du Capitaine Blood (Ere).
Best hope for the future: Thunderblade (US Gold/Sega).
Best flight sim: F18 (E.A).
Best utility: Gamme Cyber (Antic).
Now check out the scoring form for our very own mega-onwards, the Golden Joysticks, on page 120.

Rainbow Bungle

Following on from our "German Bytes" item in Fax last month, we have received this communication from Marc Ullrech, managing director of German software house Rainbow Arts. It makes clear the situation regarding their games Katakis and Giana Sisters 2, which we got, erm, sadly garbled. He begins:
" Rainbow Arts will not release Giana 2 in any country because we are not satisfied with the quality of this product. We are not going to publish a title similar to Giana 1 or 2, and we have stopped shipping Giana 1 to avoid possible damages if a third party should take legal action.
Secondly, Katakis will not be sold with the exception of Germany. A new game calle Denaris will be released throughout Europe licensed by US Gold in January. The game was basically designed with the Katakis knowhow, but with changed graphics, sound and game plot."


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Fax

All I Want f[...]

With the holly hanging up above the mantlepiece and snow lying thick and creamy all around, it's time for C + VG to come over all seasonal and start wishing for its Christmas pressies. Now you lot may well have asked for **Op Wolf** or **Afterburner** or whichever of the big coin-op conversions most took your fancy. But here at C + VG the boys and girls are slightly more ambitious than that, and have been asking for some stuff that even the most spritely and nimble of Santas would have trouble getting down the old chimney. Especially the girls! You should have seen some of the rude stuff they wrote before a shocked Fax had to put a red line through it all! Here then is what we want most in all the world (if you are shocked at the lack of computer games, it's because we've already got them all . . . !)



▲ The

JO

1 A massive house with a huge garden and all the money in the world – I'm not greedy!

2 Patrick Swayze – If I have to share him with Andrea I want the bottom half!

3 Andrea's desk – because it's the furthest away from Garry's. Sorry Lora, I asked first!

4 Sarah Greene's job – because she works with Philip Schofield and I think he's lovely.

5 A black convertible VW Beetle – the most mega brilliant car in the world.

6 A shield around my desk to protect me from Lora's earrings when she turns around to talk to me.

7 Garry Williams to voluntarily buy a round (and stop volunteering others to buy rounds!)

8 A milky bar river at the bottom of my huge garden (?? Ed).

9 To be able to make myself a cup of tea without Julian Rignall shoving his teddy bear cup under my nose.

10 To never have to work again – so I can spend less time with Garry, and more with Patrick Swayze.





JAZ

1 A Harley Davidson motobike. I'd like a blue FXE 1200 please . . .

2 Every Walt Disney animated film and short on video. I love 'em.

3 Quantel Paintbox. I'd save a lot of trees if I could doodle with light . . .

4 Every arcade machine designed by Eugene Jarvis – Sinistar, Defender, Joust, Robotron 2084, Stargate, Star Rider and his new one which he's just finishing.

5 A Chimpanzee. They're amazingly funny, and I'm sure it could sell ads better than Garry Williams.

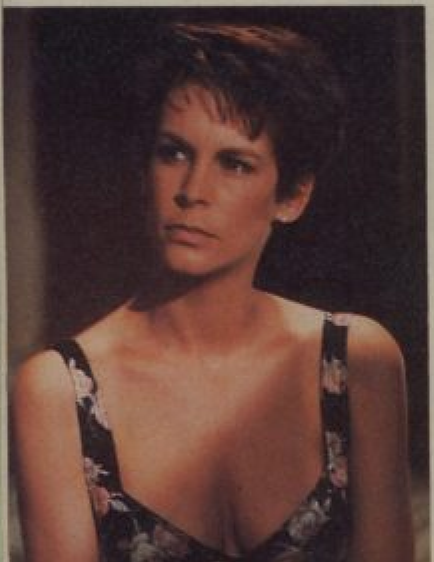
6 Brighton Pier. It's one of the best arcades in Britain . . .

7 An airline season ticket to America. I wouldn't mind a ticket to the Disney MGM studios either!

8 A video camera. Brilliant fun!! Especially when combined with the Quantel.

9 A Rediffusion tank combat simulator. A snip at a mere £60,000,000.

10 A better and cheaper train service from Brighton to London. The one at the moment is unbelievably crap.



▲ Jamie Lee – she'd never go for Gary!

GARRY

1 Jamie Lee Curtis.

2 An everlasting, automatically refilling bottle of Tennants Super Lager.

3 A spare set of kidneys.

4 Arsenal to win the treble every season.

5 Tottenham Hotspur to wind up in the Alliance Premiere League.

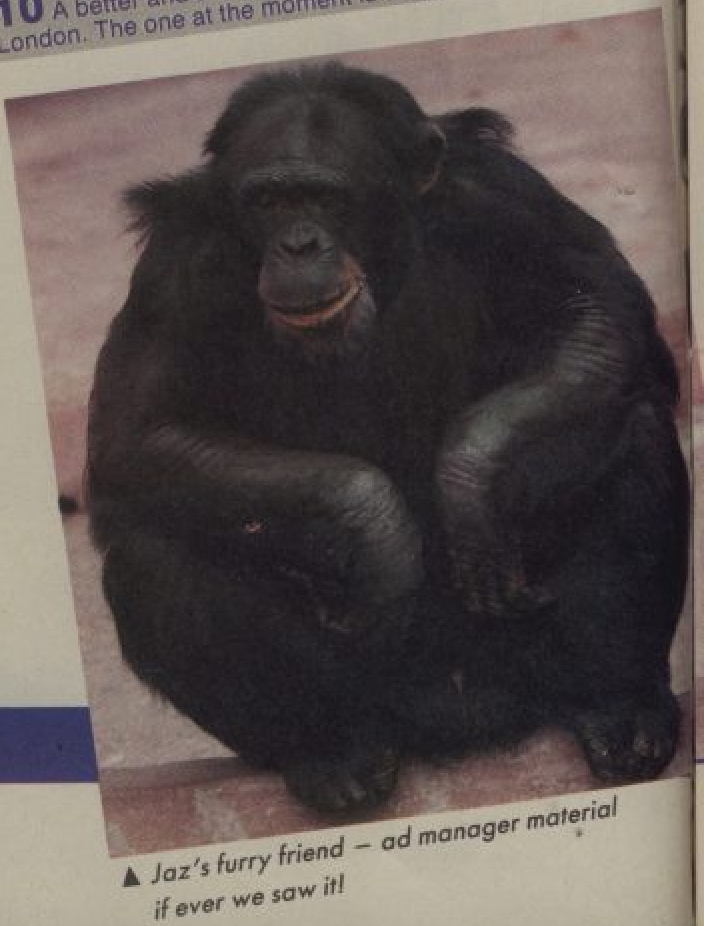
6 A labotomy – So I can work in the Editorial Department! (Anyone who has met Garry will know he's already had this present! Ed).

7 Julian Rignall to have a slow lingering death for writing nasty things about me! (Yeah? Then I'll haunt you JR).

8 Eugene Lacey to buy a round.

9 The Neighbours set to be nuked!

10 The Editorial Department to write nice things about all the good people who advertise!



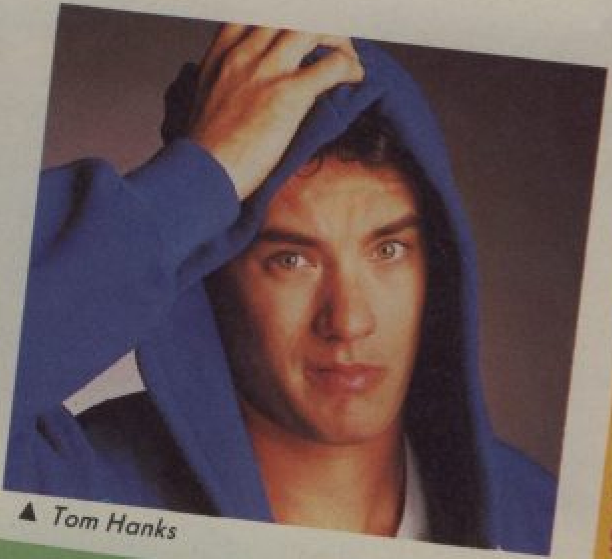
▲ Jaz's furry friend – ad manager material if ever we saw it!

for Christmas is....





▲ The am dress up warm for winter (?).



▲ Tom Hanks



EUGENE

1 Linda Lusardi to join the C + VG review team.

2 *Space Harrier* to play on our PC Engine.

3 *Super Mario Bros II* for the Nintendo.

4 A leather jacket to make me look hard.

5 A stonking great turkey with all the trimmings.

6 A really good 'Bread' Christmas special.

7 Another showing of the Snowman so I can video it this time.

8 Bristol City to knock the stuffing out of Rovers in the Boxing Day derby.

9 Stacks of choccies, selection boxes, and Terry's chocolates oranges.

10 The Queen to deliver her speech in rap.

LORA

1 A luxury flat. Who doesn't want a luxury flat?

2 Lots and lots of lovely dosh. Who doesn't want loads of dosh?

3 A wicked pair of earrings – the bigger, the better.

4 A desk not-so-near to Garry Williams – anyone want to swap?

5 Tom Hanks – but don't tell my boyfriend.

6 A camera – so I can take loads of piccies of my car!!

7 Any Brat Pack videos – Pretty in Pink, Ferris Bueller's Day off . . .

8 A decent Sandich Man – one who doesn't use bread with birdseed in!

9 The Wicked Willie Game.

10 A pair of purple flares with flowers all over them (man!)

PS. No slippers, nighties, knickers or soap sets please!

MATT

1 Datsun 240Z – it's a sportscar Datsun made in the '70s and it's truly wonderful – looks like a shorter, squatter E-type.

2 Esther – C + VG's receptionist. She keeps promising herself to me but never delivers . . .

3 PC Engine – How could you possibly work within a hundred miles of the computer games industry and not want one?

4 A working washing machine – easily the most important addition to any flat. Beats TV, central heating, even a bed hands down.

5 Dress sense – I've always envied those people that have it. Unfortunately working at C + VG Lora is the only one, so it's unlikely to rub off, is it?

6 A decent pub to open within three minutes walk of my house – there are no decent pubs near my house.

7 A "Maine Coon" – They're a special breed of domestic cat that's about the size of a border collie, and I'd use it to puzzle the neighbours. And no, I'm not sure how to spell it.

8 Julian Rignall to get all his hair cut off – It's horrible (It's called style – JR)

9 A cat boat – they're shallow water sailing barges they use in New England, and I want to live on one.

10 A washing machine that works on a cat boat – I could only live on a cat boat if they invented a washing machine that would fit on it.

ANDREA

1 An Art assistant – to do all the crappy jobs, like the filing.

2 Patrick Swayze – because he is the hunkiest person on this earth, or in any other galaxy.

3 Some decent looking blokes working on this mag.

4 Loads of dosh – even more than Lora.

5 A car and driving lessons.

6 A new chair with no glue on it.

7 A new hi-fi system with everything on it.

8 Matt to acquire some dress sense – it's pitiful.

9 Garry to have his vocal cords removed – in the most painful way possible.

10 A holiday – I haven't had one in ages, so if anyone wants to take me away all offers will be considered, the more expensive the better.



▲ Datsun Z – the bestest sports car in all the world (etc).



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Fax

Interplay, Break-away

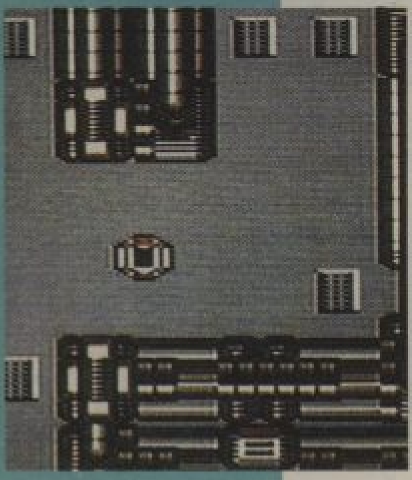
In a startling move that shocked the nation to its foundations, Interplay have split from their mother company Electronic Arts US to become a software company in their own right. The company, originally a programming team with all their work marketed by EA, have now deigned themselves worthy enough of their own slice of the market. Interplay, the team responsible for the Bard's Tale series, Wasteland and more recently Battlechess, will still continue to be distributed by EA over here. Brian Fargo, producer, designer, and general man-at-the-top, slammed any rumours that the team were to be releasing a Wasteland 2 or Bard's Tale 4. ''We are now in competition with EA. Wasteland and BT are EA products. If we were to bring out sequels, then we're just giving games to our rivals.''

However, we do have two new products coming out in early 89. One is being programmed by the same team that did BT, and the other is being done by the same guys that did Wasteland. Titles are to be announced, and I'm not telling anything just yet, but they are looking quite good. Of course, as soon as we know, we'll let you know.

You can check out Interplay's latest spiffo wheeze, Neuromancer, by flicking over to page 74.

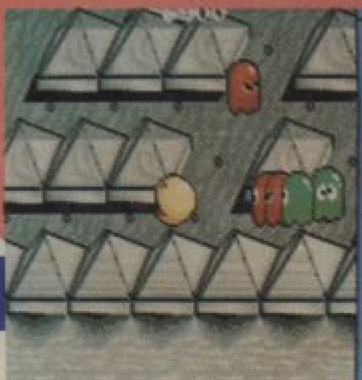
Hero For Hire

This isn't exactly a new idea – Sensible Software did it with Micro Soccer for example – but it's nowhere near standard industry practice: these demo screens belong to a game as yet without a publisher. Martin Walker, the man behind the cult classic Hunter's Moon, is the designer of Citadel, this near finished shoot 'em up. Behind the walls and floors of these oppresive corridors – "I tried to get the feel of Blade Runner," he says – lurk both new weapons and deadly traps. The plan is to have the game ready for early in the New Year, with a publisher sorted by about Christmas – "so that I can buy big nut cutlets with the advance!" (JR's note: He's a vegetarian).



The Original Pac's Back

A snippet of news arriving just a little too late to be included in the Mean Machines section is that there's soon to be a Nintendo version of PacMan. Yes indeed – the conversion will be totally faithful to the original 1982 mega hit, right down to the simplistic graphics and sound. So, anyone fancying a nostalgic dot-gobbling binge will soon be able to wikka-wikka-wikka until their heart's content.





Latex Laffs



If Santa spits in your Christmas stocking, don't worry – it's probably just the Spitting Image Giant Komic Book, a bumper volume packed full of jolly japes and wheezes with your favourite characters from the world of comedy.

It's laughter all the way with The Crazy Psychedelic World of Frank Bough, Dr Owen (He's All Alowen) and No Head Robson of the English soccer squad. You too can thrill to Judge Deaf and learn how to make yourself look like Ronald Reagan. There's even a couple of sneaky adverts for Spit T-Shirts and slippers – Holy Merchandising Ploy, Batman! At £4.95 the only thing that's missing is the rubbery smell of the original – though perfectionists could try reading it with a pair of Marigold gloves on their pinkies!

Tadio Rimes CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR

ABC 1

9.00am SAVAGE

First out of the stocking this Christmas has to be **SAVAGE.** An epic of gargantuan proportions in three mind blowing action packed levels.
Savage features graphics so stunning they'll put your Christmas tree lights to shame!
Spectrum cassette £8.99
Commodore 64 cassette £9.99, disc £12.99
Amstrad cassette £8.99, disc £14.99



Amstrad screen shot

11.00am ELITE

Intergalactic action hits the 16-bit screen with a bang as the all time classic **ELITE** explodes into solid 3D splendour. Be warned, this game is so addictive you'll be up all night . . . and Santa won't leave any goodies if you don't get to bed on time!
Atari ST £24.95
Amiga £24.95


Atari ST screen shot

3.00pm DYNAMIC DUO

Going underground takes on a new meaning as you battle through pitch black tunnels and passageways in search of wealth beyond your wildest imagination. But beware of lurking monsters with no sense of tradition, it's duck not turkey on **their** Christmas menu.
Spectrum cassette £7.99
Commodore 64 cassette £9.99, disc £12.99
Amstrad cassette £8.99, disc £14.99

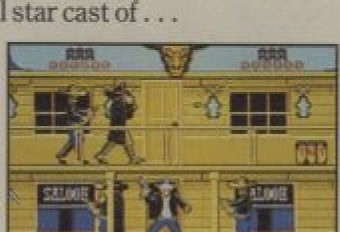

Amstrad screen shot

6.00pm BLAZING BARRELS

Christmas just wouldn't be the same without a rip roarin' Western. So Firebird are proud to present, fresh from their famous ICOM studios, **BLAZING BARRELS,** featuring the all star cast of . . .

Bammo
THE MEXICAN BANDITO
TNT Tom
THE **REALLY** BAD GUY
You, alias Black Jake
THE BOUNTY HUNTER

Atari ST £19.99
Amiga £19.99



Atari ST screen shot

9.00pm EXPLODING FIST +

When the snow starts a-falling and the wind starts a-howling there's nothing better to warm up those frost bitten fingers than the blistering heat of **EXPLODING FIST +.**

If you're feeling guilty after stuffing your face with all that Christmas turkey, here's your chance to get back into shape — or get kicked into the middle of the New Year!
Spectrum cassette £7.99
Commodore 64 cassette £9.99, disc £12.99

Commodore 64 screen shot





Sequel to the blockbuster
WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST!

Christmas Viewing

FIREBIRD
A LEGEND IN GAMES SOFTWARE

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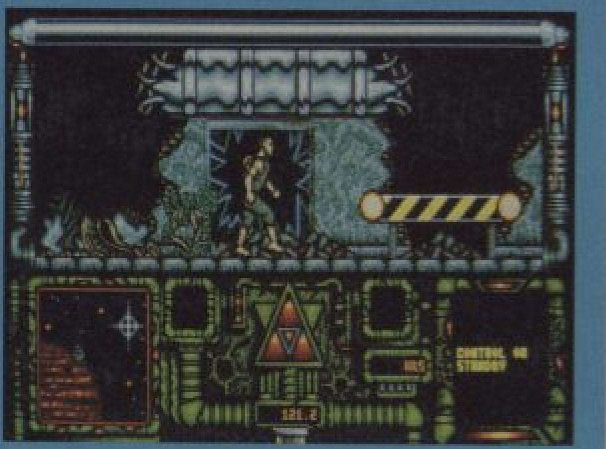
Fax

Continental Cock-Up

Ace 3D arcade game Continental Circus was originally called the much more obvious "Continental Circuit" by originators Taito. However, Fax (the magazine section) can now reveal that Fax (the telephone message machine) was responsible for the blunder. Taito's European people received a garbled message about the new arcade product from Japan, and immediately had the machine cabinets and promotional material run up featuring the new, wrong name they had received: a name that seemingly has no possible association with motor racing!

Chrysalis Cracks

Prison, shown here, is a 16-bit adventure very much along the lines of Obliterator – the story of a convict on a penal planet trying to put together an escape ship. It is the first product from a new outfit called Chrysalis, formed by two guys ex of Teque, developers of such titles as Terrormex and Pac-Mania. The player must search for clues to the missing parts of the ship, while fighting off hostile mutant lifeforms. Prison doesn't sound immensely original, but it could well be a good start: ST and Amiga owners must wait for the New Year to see.



Dino Riders Compo

About a trillion, billion years ago, a handful of aliens fled to this planet, chased there by another lot intent on doing nasty things to them. Quickly, and for reasons best known to themselves, they equipped the native lifeforms they found there – dinosaurs to you and me – with guns and armour and stuff and went beating the stuffing out of each other. Yep, convoluted scenarios are no longer the exclusive preserve of computer games! Dino Riders are apparently the latest craze in the Transformers/Zoids/Go Bots ballpark: a collection of fully articulated plastic reptiles in full battle dress. Coming in at between £3.99 and £59.99 there's one to empty the most bulging wallet – even that belonging to one Mr Garry Williams, C + VG's capacious ad manager. It's a good job then that we have a nice assortment of the things to give away as late Christmas pressies, isn't it? And not only that, but we've twenty (TWENTY!) videos featuring the toys to offload too: twenty-five minute cartoon adventures yet to be seen on British TV. Lots of good booty to be won, therefore, and we'll keep picking winners 'till we've got rid of it all. There should be about thirty of you. All we need to know is:

DINO RIDERS ENTRY FORM

1) The Loch Ness Monster is claimed to be a dinosaur, but which sort?

Iguanandon Plesiosaur Wodgosaur

2) The Flintstones pet is called . . .

Dino Rex Toby

3) Who starred in the prehistoric epic "One million years B.C." Was it . . .

Maria Whittaker Lora Clark Raquel Welch

Name..

Address..

..



Charts

SPECTRUM TOP TEN

1	Last Ninja 2 – System 3
2	Bomb Jack – Encore
3	Joe Blade 2 – Players
4	Ad. Pinball Sim – Code Masters
5	I'tional Rugby Sim – Code M'sters
6	Footballer of the Year – Kixx
7	Football Manager 2 – Addictive
8	Pro S'board Sim – Code Masters
9	Commando – Encore
10	Supreme Chall. – Beau Jolly

Last Ninja, the only full-pricer, stays at the top, while Rugby is a new entry and Skateboard a re-entry.

COMMODORE 64 TOP TEN

1	Last Ninja 2 – System 3
2	Armalyte – Thalamus
3	Joe Blade 2 – Players
4	Bomb Jack – Encore
5	Barbarian 2 – Palace
6	Inter. Rugby Sim. – Code Masters
7	Taito Coin-Ops – Ocean
8	Commando – Encore
9	Ace of Aces – Kixx
10	Pro S'board Sim. – Code M'sters

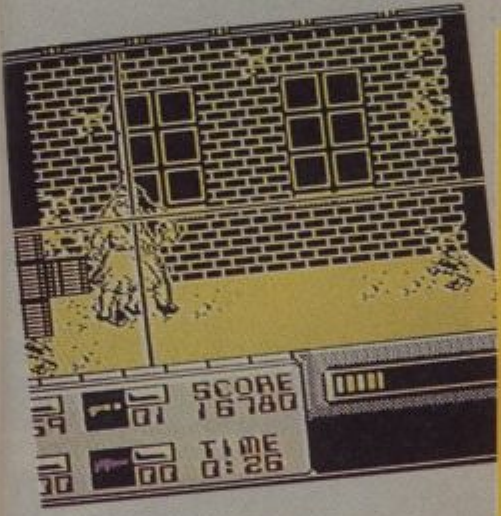
Many positions stay the same, Armalyte enters at number two and looks set to knock System 3 of their perch. A healthy mix of full price and budget stuff as we near Christmas.

AMSTRAD TOP TEN

1	Joe Blade 2 – Players
2	Last Ninja 2 – System 3
3	Kik Start 2 – Mastertronic
4	Bomb Jack – Encore
5	Supreme Chall. – Beau Jolly
6	Air Wolf – Encore
7	BMX Ninja – Alternative
8	Battleships – Encore
9	Super Stuntman – Code Masters
10	Gauntlet – Kixx

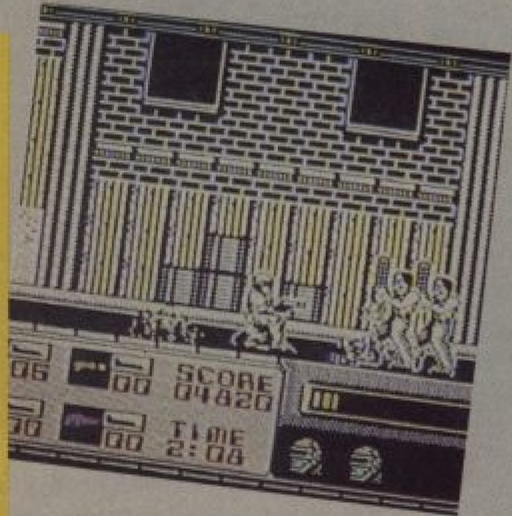
Only one full price non-compilation around, Last Ninja 2 in a chart stacked full of re-releases, re-entries and re-entering re-releases. It's all a bit sad.

C+VG REVIEWS



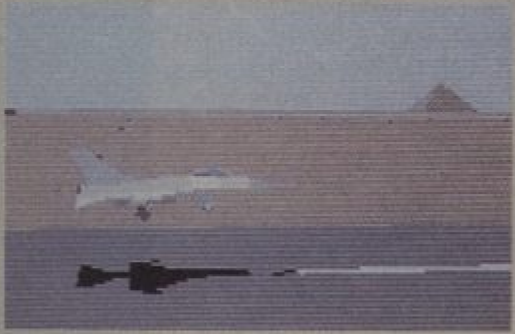
GAME OF THE MONTH ROBOCOP

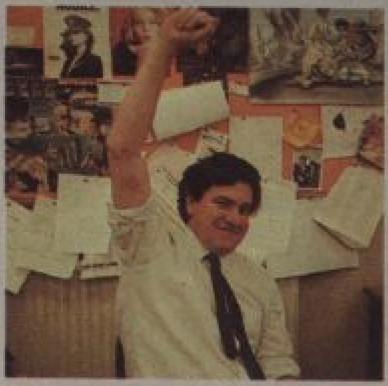
Turn to page 42 to find out exactly why Ocean's game-of-the-film gets C+VG's most prestigious award.





OTHERS





EUGENE LACEY
The voice of experience. The C+VG Ed has been around longer than a ZX80 and certainly knows his stuff. He's partial to shoot 'em ups, but doesn't say no to the odd arcade adventure.
FAVE GAMES: Top Gun, Zak McKracken, Joan of Arc.



CIARAN BRENNAN
Another ex-ZZAP! Editor, and more recently the former Dep Ed of Your Sinclair, Ciaran comes to C+VG as the voice of reason. No bull — Brennan tells you how it is.
FAVE GAMES: Falcon ST, Chase HQ, Hybris.



JULIAN RIGNALL
Or Jaz, as he likes to be called. Ex-ZZAP! Editor, he owns just about every computer and console going and is a total arcade addict.
FAVE GAMES: Robocop, Legendary Axe, Vindicators.



TONY DILLON
Or the Dildoid, as he does like to be called. He's a self-confessed sex thimble and loves playing computer games — when he's not listening to heavy metal.
FAVE GAMES: Times of Lore, Robocop, Falcon ST.

Reviews

THUNDE

► **MACHINES: SPEC/AM/C64/ST AMIGA.**
► **US GOLD.**
► **PRICE: SPEC £8.99, CASS, C64/AMS £9.99, CASS ST £19.99, AMIGA £24.99.**
► **VERSION TESTED: ST/SPEC.**
► **REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.**

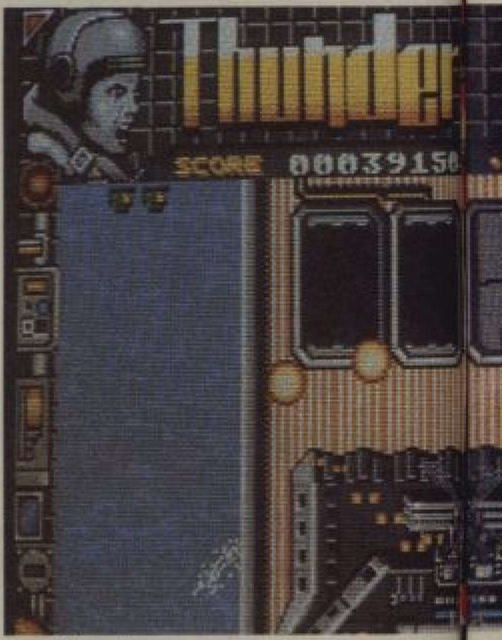
US Gold clinched the 1986 Christmas number one slot with Gauntlet, and a year later did the double with Out Run. This year they're hoping to make it a treble with Thunderblade – but they'll have to fight every inch of the way if they're going to beat Operation Wolf and Afterburner to the yuletide top slot.

Thunderblade, Sega's impressive helicopter shoot 'em up, appeared in the arcades earlier this year and followed hot on the heels of Afterburner. As with most Sega arcade games there are different models: a stand-up version for pubs and small arcades, and a deluxe sit-on version: a mechanical monster that spins the player as he moves left and right. Although this was a novel idea (and cheap – the entire machine is fully mechanical and not hydraulic), it doesn't give as impressive and thrilling a ride as Afterburner. And to be honest, I always felt like a wally perched a-top the machine waggling the long joystick – give me the stand-up version any day!

The game itself casts the player into the role of a megalomaniacal pilot who's decided to take on a mighty enemy army single-handedly. Before anyone can stop him he's up and away in his fully-armed Apache helicopter and heading towards the nearest war zone . . .

There are four levels of action, each with three distinct sub-sections. The first is set in the city and is a vertically scrolling 3D shoot 'em up. Although this sounds odd, it's actually quite simple to explain. The helicopter can fly forwards, effectively scrolling the landscape downwards and is also able to move up and down, "into" and "out" of the screen – that's where the 3D comes in.

The city is comprised of – surprise, surprise – skyscrapers, and the helicopter is guided around or over these; hitting a building results in the chopper crashing to the ground in a twisted and flaming mess of metal and a loss of one of five lives.



Blast the enemy carrier.

JR's chopper rains death on the enemy.



Spectrum version – excellent game play, better than ST.



Tanks patrol the ground, and fire white missiles at the chopper as it flies overhead. Nifty maneouvring is required to dodge these deadly items, especially as the collision detection tends to favour the enemy – a missile that looks like it's going to just miss the helicopter is often judged as a hit, which is a mite annoying.

As the chopper flies forward, it fires bullets and missiles automatically destroying any tank or ground target that gets in the way.

At the top right of the screen is a distance meter, which ticks down as the chopper progresses. When the meter is diminished, the next level loads – in this case the second city section. This is displayed in first person 3D, rather like Afterburner. Buildings whizz by as the chopper wends its way through this

ERBLADE







The skyscraper scene – swivel that chopper through the gaps.

concrete canyon. Tanks make an appearance again, and fire white missiles. This time they're easier to dodge – the collision detection is more generous – although they're sometimes obscured by the large explosions of tanks as they go up.

Planes and enemy helicopters fly across the screen and are blasted out of the way; contact is fatal. The damage meter is again in evidence, and its depletion brings the player to the last of level one's sub-games.

This is another vertically scrolling section, but this time with no 3D.

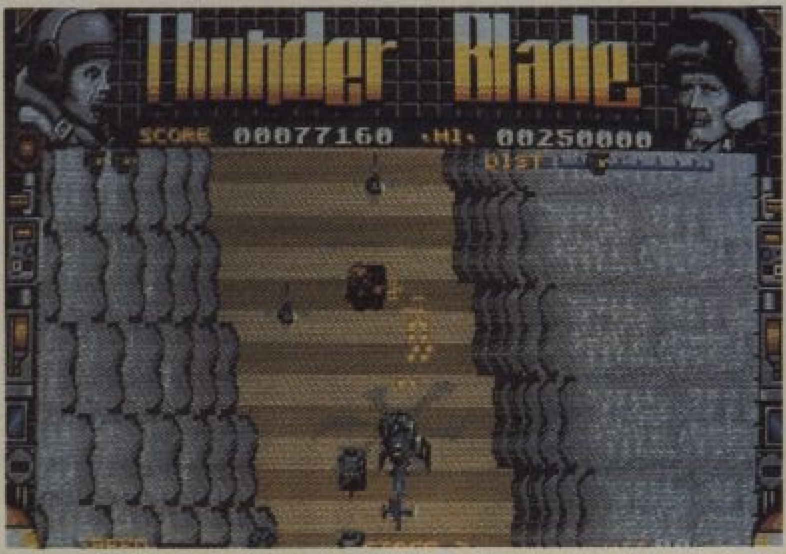
The chopper flies low over a giant ship that's simply bristling with gun emplacements. These have to be taken out very quickly – if they're left they fire volleys of missiles at the helicopter and make life very difficult. There are also targets on the ship which can be blasted for bonus points.

When the ship's bow is reached a points bonus is awarded for the number of targets destroyed during the level and the time taken to complete it – the fast the time the bigger the bonus – and play switches to the next level.

This, as with the other two levels – is fundamentally similar to the first level, with the sub-games falling into the same 3D/scroll, formast. First is a canyon run, with the sides of a steep valley taking the place of skyscrapers. Tanks appear, and helicopters also enter the fray to add an extra degree of difficulty. The second sub game is a forest, with the chopper flying low over the trees attempting to take out tanks and planes, and the third section is a desert.

The third and fourth levels take place over the ocean and a refinery respectively, and each gets progressively harder, with increasing numbers of enemy forces.

The tanks blast you in the canyon.



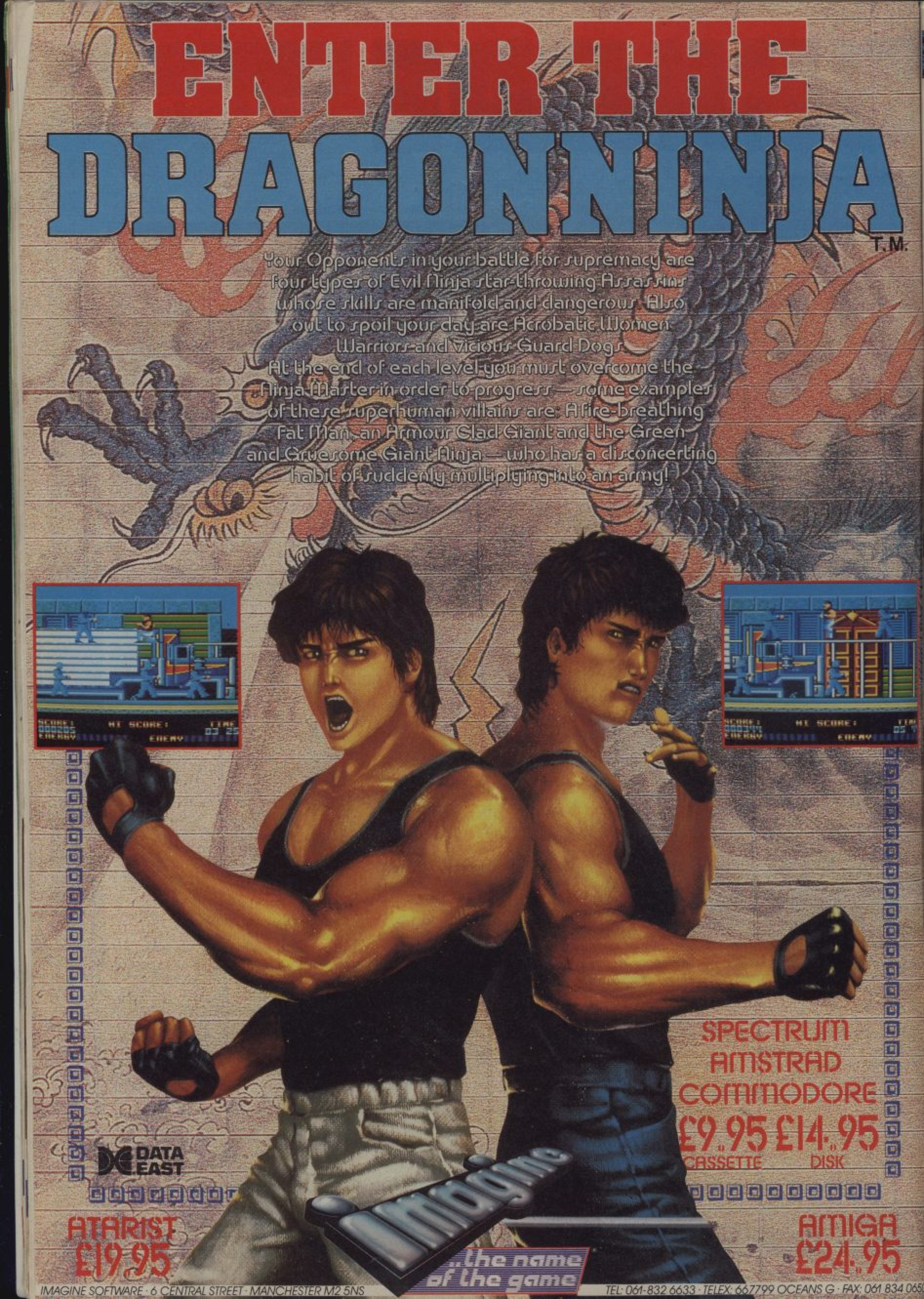
The ST incarnation of Thunderblade has all the features of the arcade game, looks and plays almost identically, but suffers from a few minor flaws and one big one. The major flaw is with the game itself; let me explain. When manufacturers design a video game, they do so with one primary thought in their mind – to make the game earn as much money as possible. Sometimes this is done by making the game difficult, or by limiting the levels – after all, arcade owners don't want gamers playing their games all day for 20p!

Unfortunately Thunderblade falls into the limited levels category, and has only four levels, each with three short sub-sections. And really it doesn't matter how good the conversion is, there still isn't enough to keep a games player addicted for a long period of time.

Looking at the ST conversion, US Gold's development house Tiertex have managed to squeeze in all the original arcade features, but the result is a sluggish and jerky game. The helicopter is slow to respond to joystick movements and the game speeds up and slows down depending on how much is going on – something I haven't seen for quite a while. Shooting ground targets is very tricky.

The arcade game was quick to respond, and the two joysticks on the

Continued on page 25



THUNDERBLADE

Reviews



Thunderblade – "only four levels".

machine meant that you could move in and out of the screen quickly. On the computer the chopper is so sluggish, by the time it actually responds to the joystick the tank has trundled past. This lack of precision also provides problems during the 3D sections: you can see an obstacle coming up, but the chopper just doesn't move out of the way in time – even though you're tugging the joystick like crazy.

The loading time between sub-games is long, and disrupts the flow of play, and there's an annoying end-of-game wait while a sampled soundtrack plays and the first level reloads.

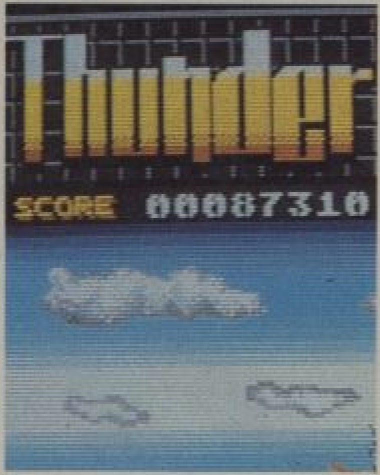
On the positive side, the game is very colourful, with some gorgeous graphics and convincing 3D – if you ignore the jerky update. Sound is quite good with some harsh effects, but the sampled titled music is atmospheric, if a little scratchy.

Thunderblade will definitely appeal to those who love the arcade original, but I don't think it offers enough challenge and variety – I practically finished the game in an afternoon.

If you haven't played the arcade game and fancy the sound of it, I strongly recommend you try it out before parting with your money.

The Spectrum version is very good. It's monochromatic, and consequently dodging missiles is tricky because you can't see them, but the gameplay is slightly better and more challenging than the ST, and the movement and response is much quicker! Generally I found the gameplay addictive and enjoyable, and the game has more lasting appeal than the 16-bit version. Definitely recommended.

Watch out.



Thunderblade – US Gold pushing for their third Xmas smash.



ST

- ► GRAPHICS 82%
- ► SOUND 79%
- ► VALUE 62%
- ► PLAYABILITY 67%
- ► **OVERALL 66%**

SPECTRUM

- ► GRAPHICS 83%
- ► SOUND 81%
- ► VALUE 78%
- ► PLAYABILITY 87%
- ► **OVERALL 82%**

UPDATE . . .

The Amiga version is looking similar to the ST, but is a lot smoother and the sound is far better.

Amstrad will be a more colourful rendition of the Spectrum version, and it is hoped that it'll be just as smooth and playable.

Chris Butler, author of Space Harrier and Ghosts 'n' Goblins has converted Thunderblade to C64, and it's looking promising, if a little blocky.

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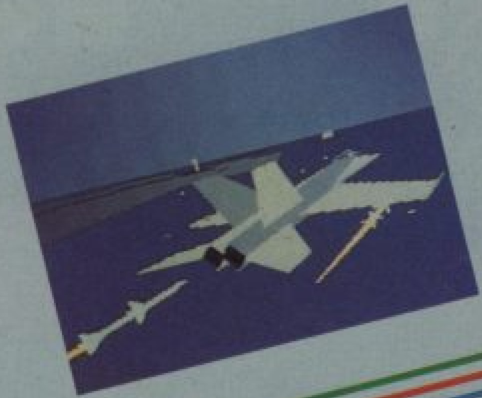
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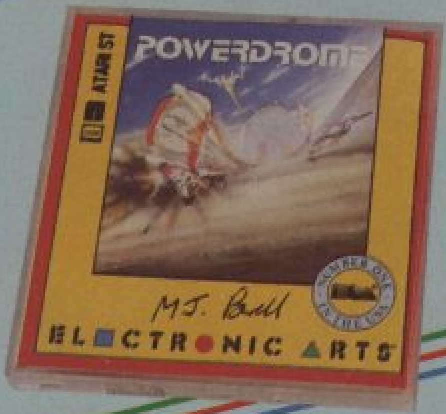
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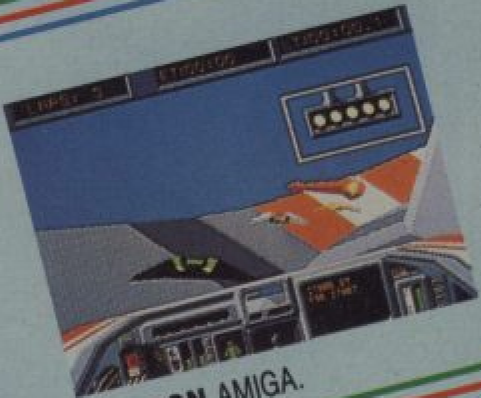




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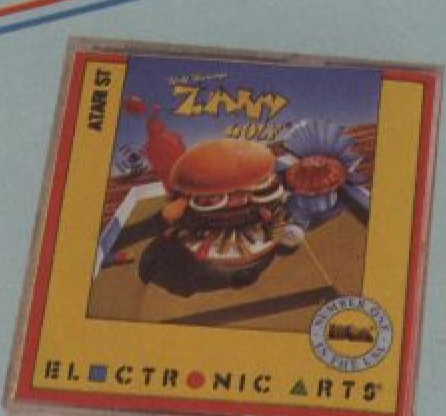
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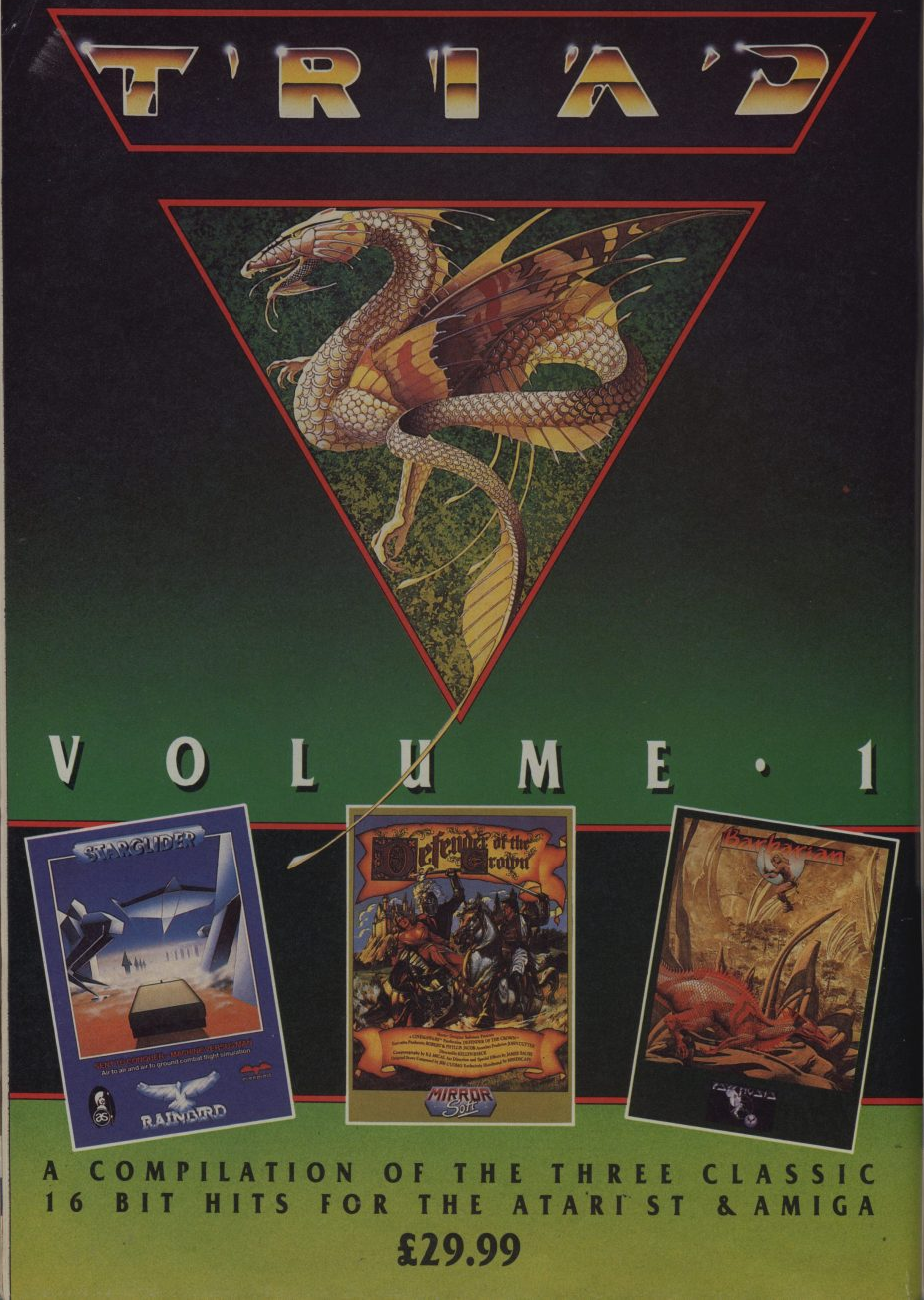
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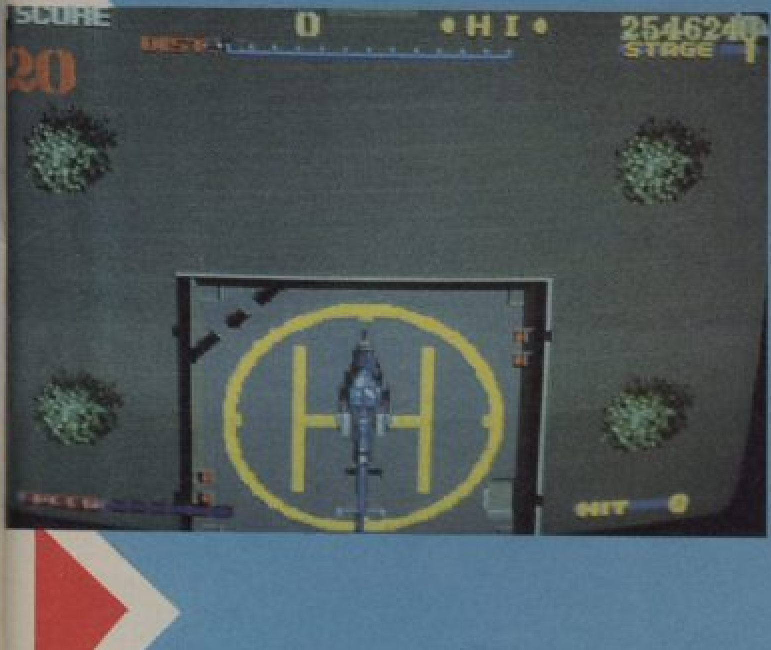
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FIVE FIST-FULLS OF

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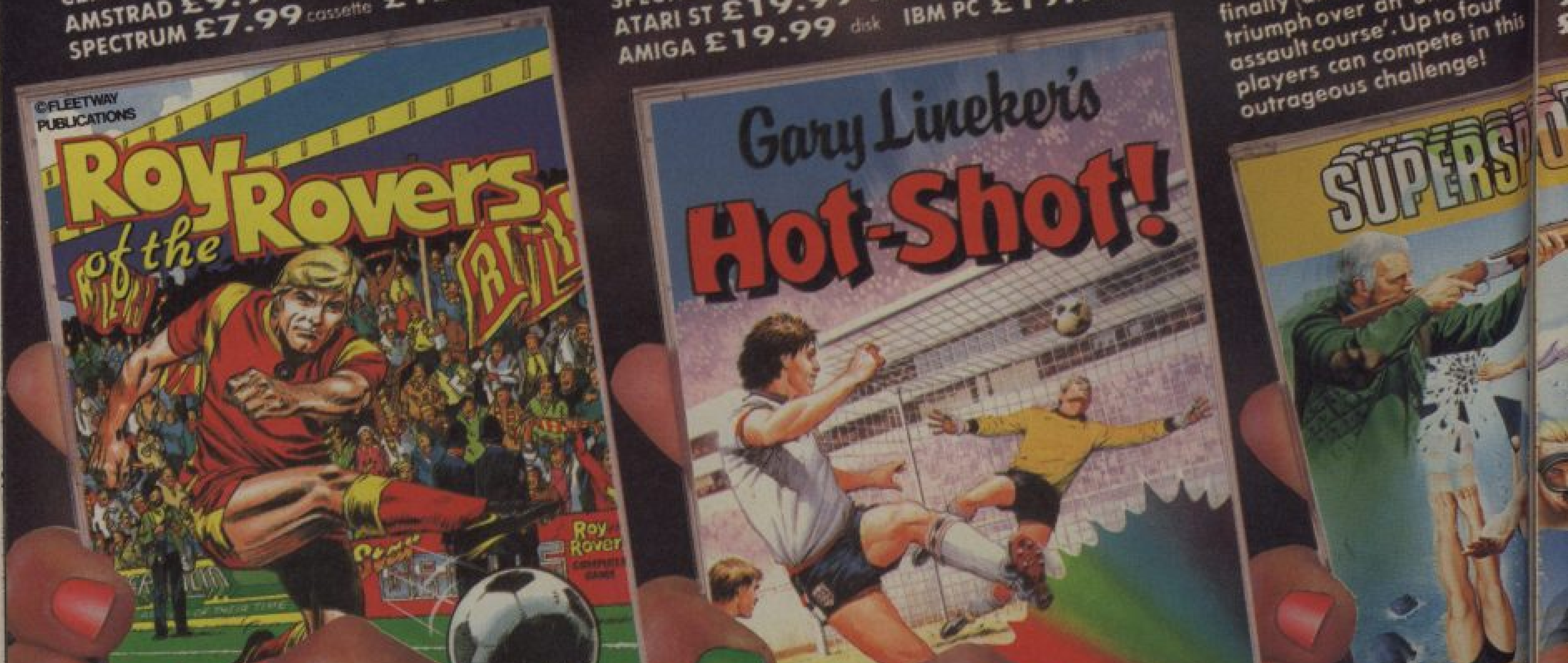
GARY LINEKER'S HOT SHOT

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GREMLIN



Screen shots from various formats.

Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House,

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GARY LINEKER'S SUPERSKILLS

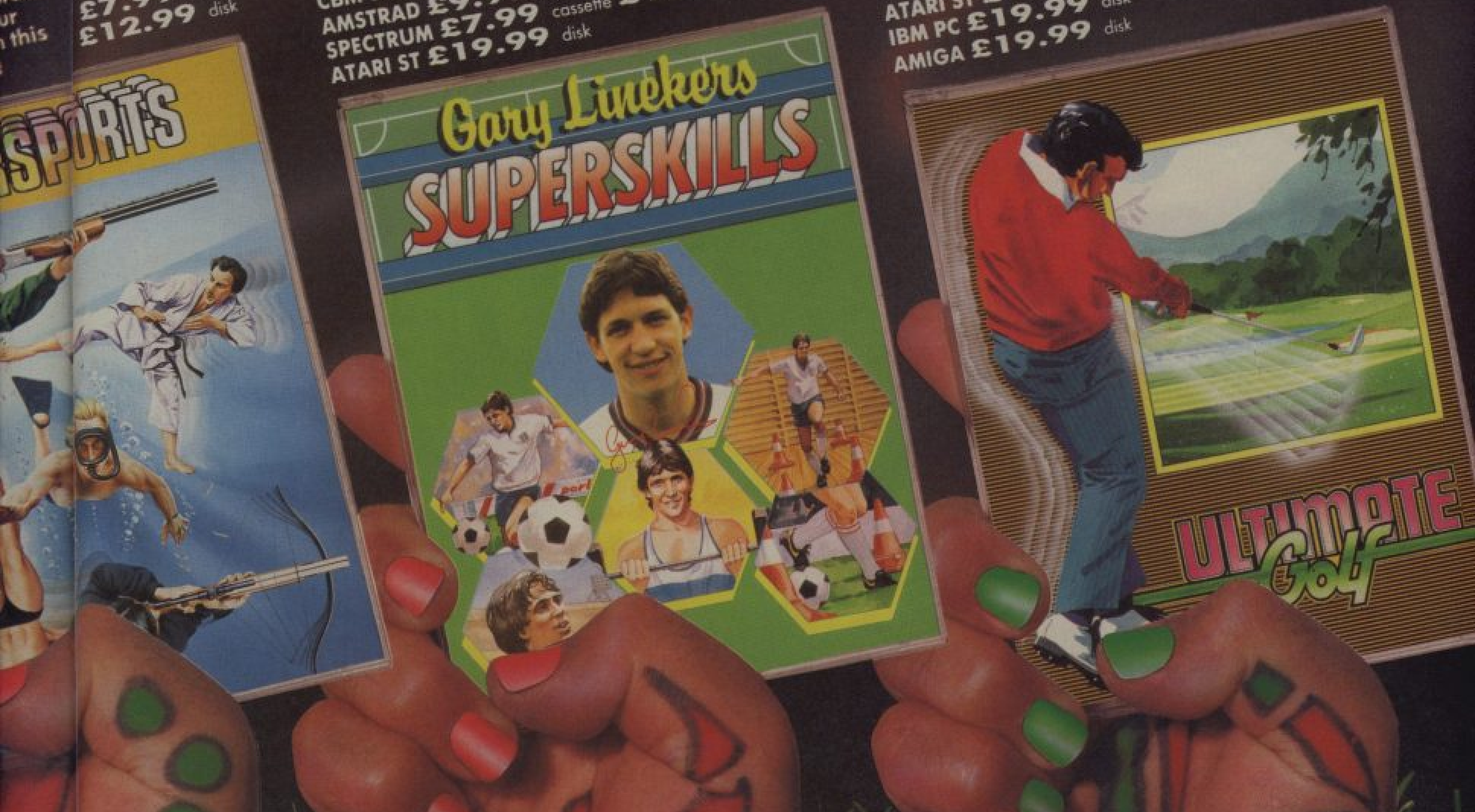
Hot on the heels of the hugely successful Superstar Soccer comes Superskills, again endorsed by England's star striker. To command a permanent place in the national team means dedication – dedication towards hard work and training. The national coach has designed an extensive training programme which will improve your fitness, ball control, sharpness and accuracy. Can you prove yourself to be both physically and mentally agile and alert?

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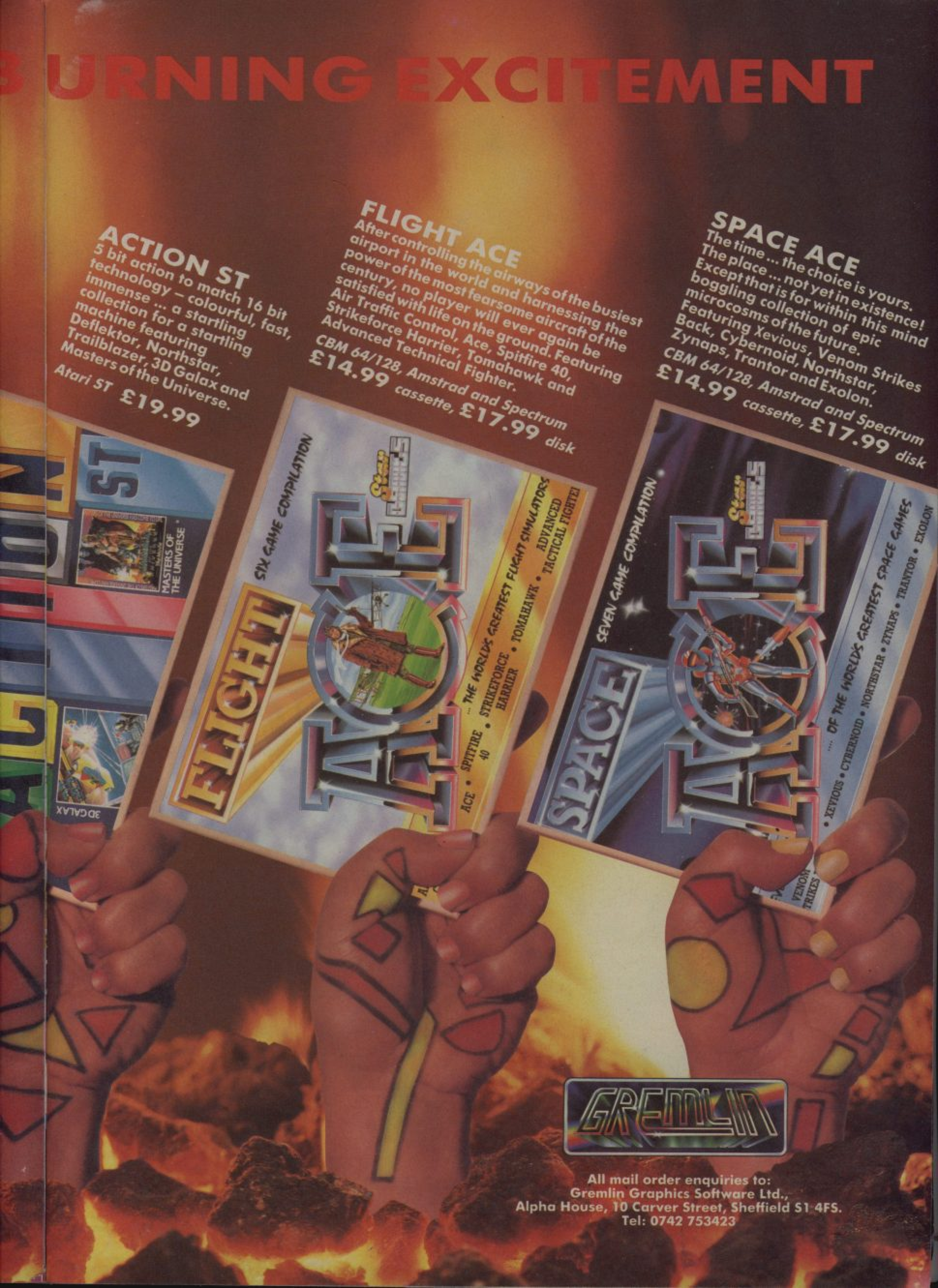
Screen shots from various formats.

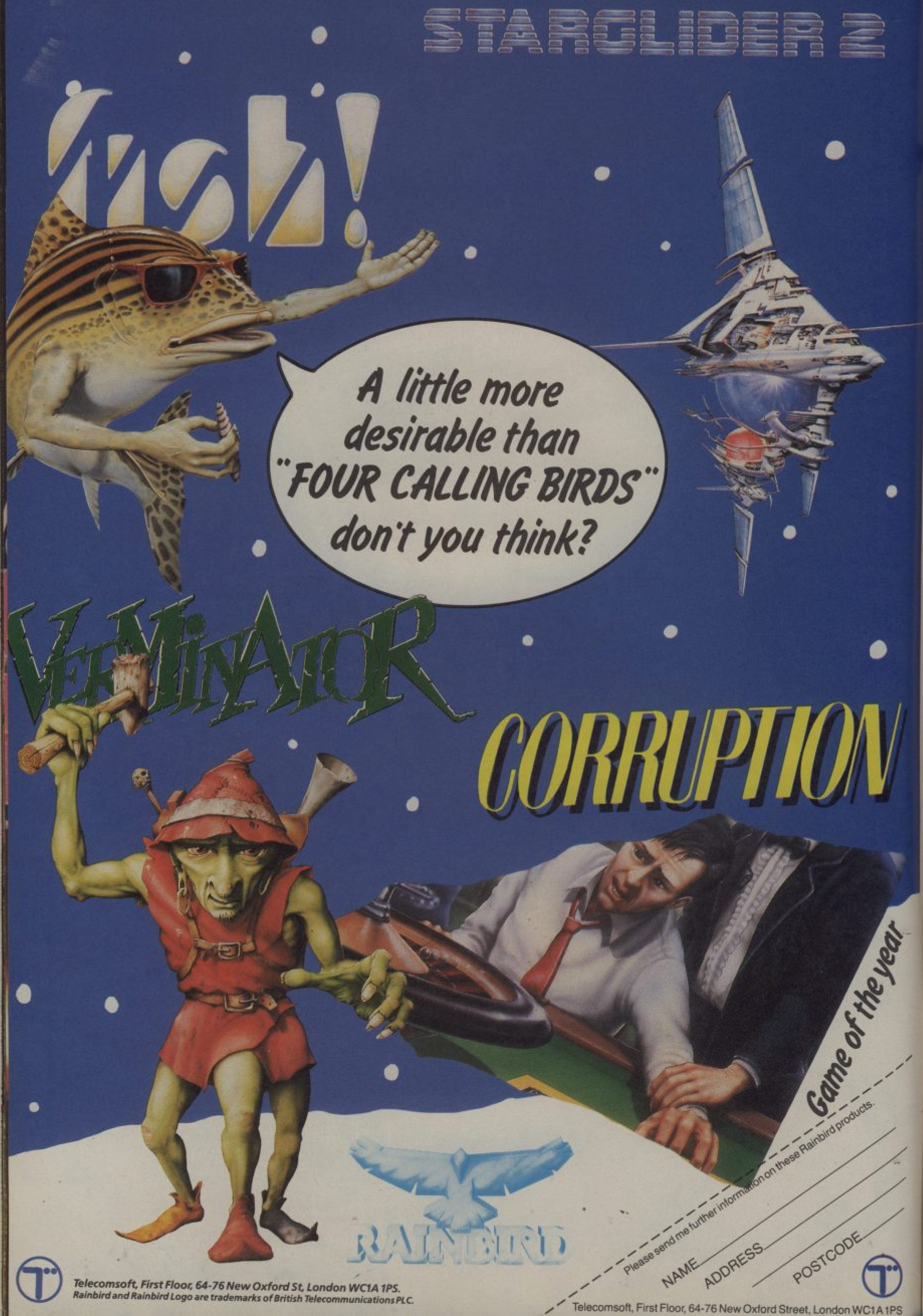
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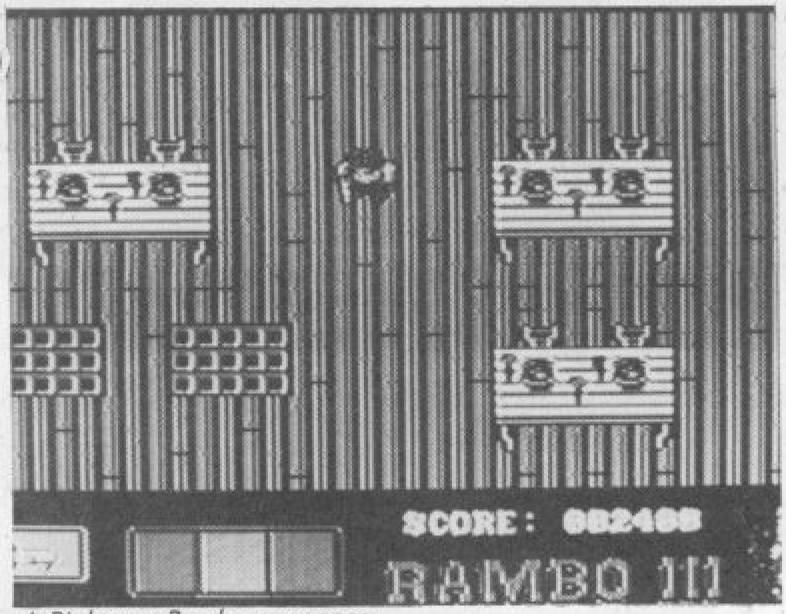


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► **MACHINES: SPEC, 64, AMSTRAD.**
► **OCEAN.**
► **PRICE: SPECTRUM £8.95, C64/AMSTRAD £9.95, DISK £14.95.**
► **VERSION TESTED: C64.**
► **REVIEWER: MATT BIELBY.**



▲ *Righteous Rambo rampages . . .*

RAMBO III

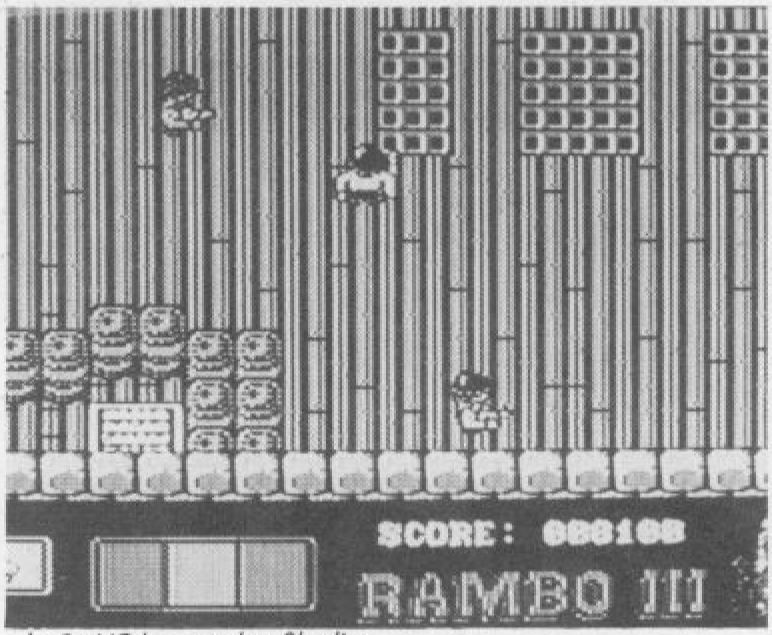
You've got a bit of a problem of repetition when you commit yourself to producing games based on big film licenses which is what people like Ocean have done. All the suitable famous actor action computer games, which nine times out of ten means scrolling shoot 'em up. So here – surprise, surprise – we have a little squat Sly sprite (again) and a product that, if nothing else, is nowhere near as dire as awful movie.

The first mission you undertake is a Gauntlet style arcade adventure, with screens flipping rather than scrolling. Seen from an odd not-quite-straight-down angle, John Rambo and peskie ruskies alike look like tiny little shambling male members rushing around the screen. You are trying to rescue your idiot colonel who has got himself captured in Afghanistan, but in the mean time you get to let free lots of rebel prisoners and shoot lots of folk. Plenty of useful stuff to collect for later on around this level – like keys, rubber gloves, infa red goggles and so on – as well as a rather tricky and frustrating problem: how to get past the one electrified door. Now the rubber gloves may have had something to do with it, but we at C+VG eventually found an all but invisible lever on the wall of one of the rooms, which suddenly makes the thing a whole lot safer. There is still a mine field to be negotitated outside, however, and you are likely to be badly short of energy by this point already. The electric door problem is certainly one that the real Rambo couldn't have worked out for himself.

The next stage is not too different, taking place outside the buildings in the compound itself, but once you've blown that place sky high the action takes a different twist. Stealing a tank, you now see things from a Rambo point of view, aiming your weapon with the sight Operation Wolf style. Kill rate goes up here rather rapidly, to say the least!

Film tie ins weights things towards the production of very acceptable but dull games – the Toyota's of the industry.

This is quite a major license, and an unembarassing game, but nobody will be talking about it in six months time. We'll have a Rambo IV then in any case.



▲ *C+VG has another Sly dig.*

▼ *Shades of Eagle's Nest . . .*



► GRAPHICS 70%
► SOUND 68%
► VALUE 65%
► PLAYABILITY 73%
► **OVERALL 71%**

UPDATE . . .

All versions play the same. The Spectrum version will be less colourful than the C64, and the Amstrad will be more attractive.

16-bit versions are up and coming in the New Year, with better graphics.

LOMBAR RAL

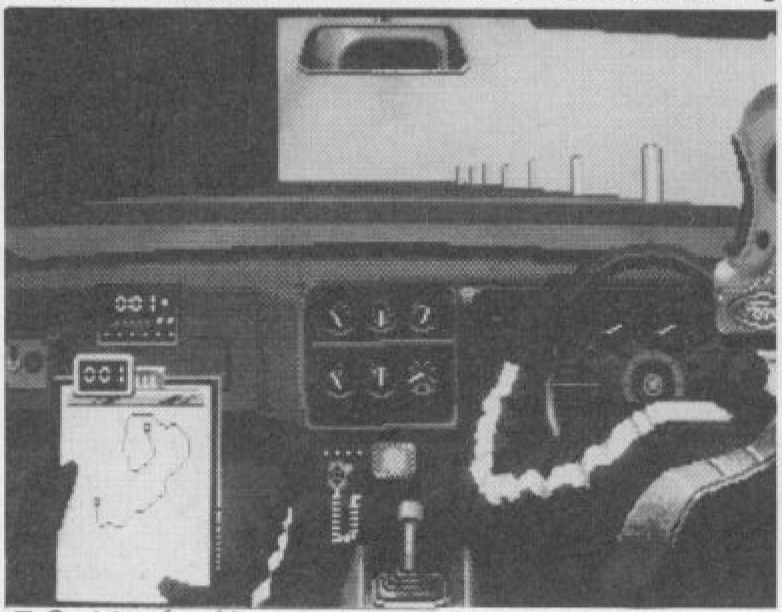
► **MACHINES: ST/AMIGA/IBM PC.**
► **SUPPLIER: MANDARIN.**
► **PRICE: £24.95 ALL VERSIONS.**
► **VERSION TESTED: ST.**
► **REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.**

The first RAC Rally was held back in 1932, and since then the competition has grown steadily to become one of the premier international rallies. It's a tough and demanding race, and tests the drivers and cars to their limits.

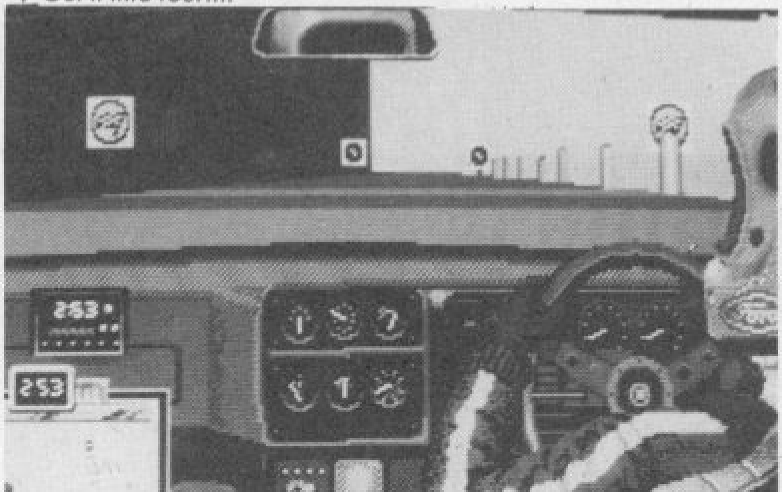
Mandarin's latest release is a simulation of the rally, and allows armchair racers to take the wheel of a Ford Sierra RS Cosworth and enter the rally without need of sponsors or a hefty registration fee.

At the start an option screen is displayed, allowing the player to enter a full rally, drive each of the five legs separately (each leg has three consecutive stages), visit the workshop, attend a TV interview, practice racing, or watch a demo.

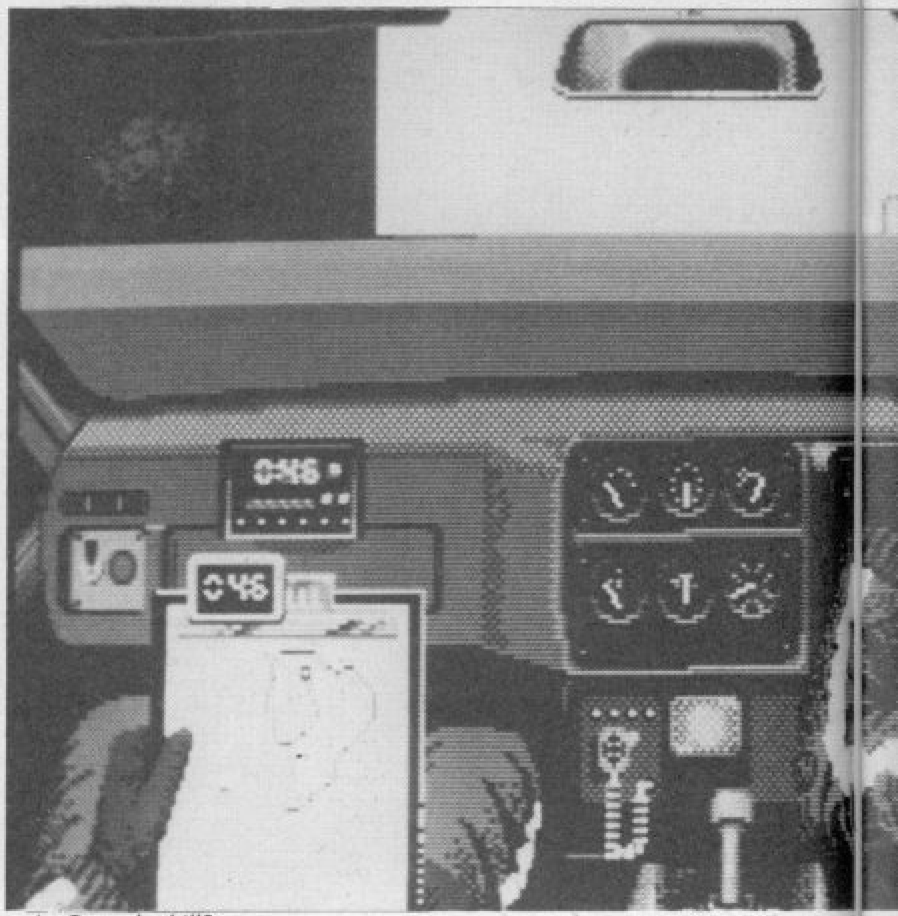
Visiting the workshop allows repairs and improvements to be made upon the car, from buying new engines and installing four wheel drive to honing



▼ *Get it into fourth!*



▼ *The end is nigh.*



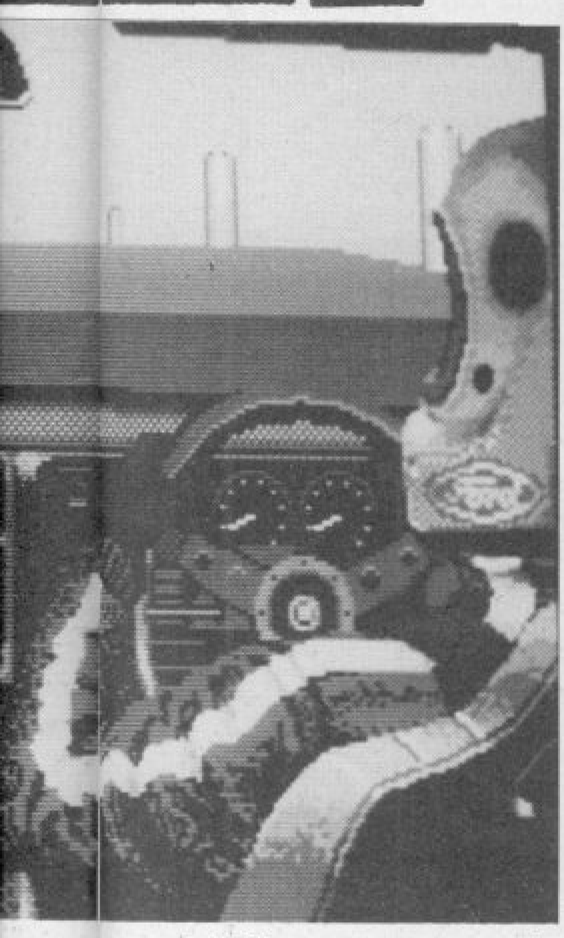
▲ *Over the hill?*

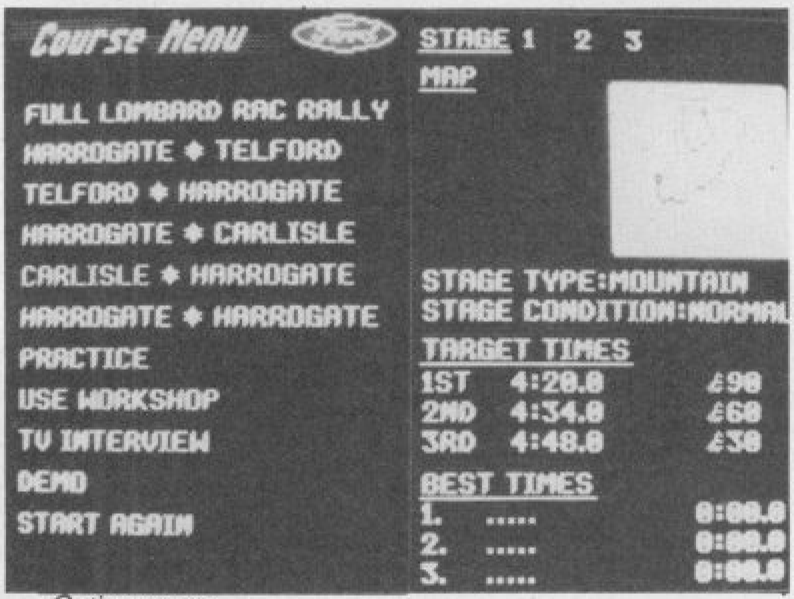
the suspension and tuning the engine. The car is broken down into four components: engine, wheels, bodywork and suspension. Each has a percentage representing its current state of repair. As improvements are made, the percentage is increased (costing £1 for every percent improvement). Naturally, the better condition the car, the faster and more reliable it is – let the damage go unrepaired and the chances are that the car will either break down, or won't be fit to enter the rally.

All these repairs cost money, and the only way money can be earned is by either winning races or by attending a TV interview. The latter is, in fact, a series of racing trivia questions: answer correctly and a wad of dosh is yours; wrong, and it's into the race with no improvements. There's a limit of one TV interview before each race.

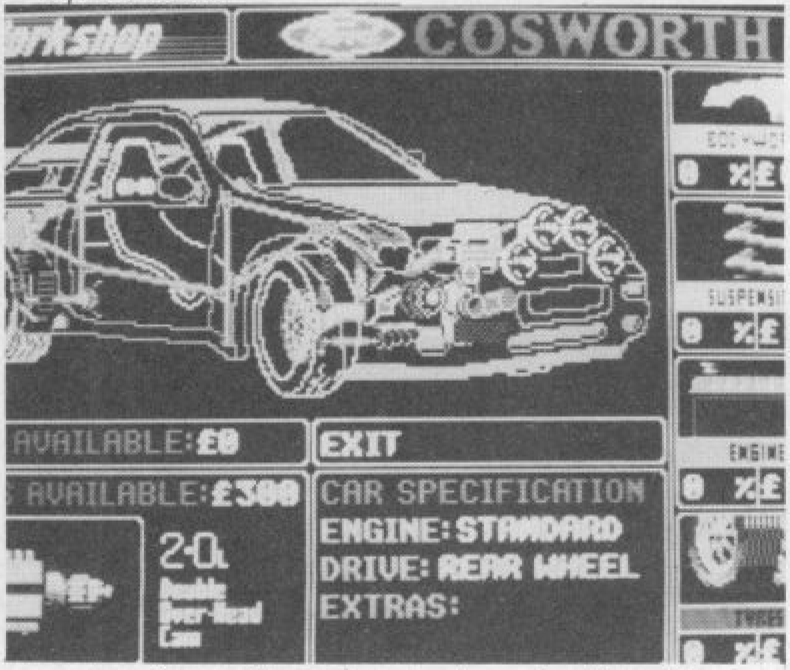
When the required improvements have been made, the race begins – either a full rally, or a single stage. The road is viewed

RD RAC
LY





Options screen.



in 3D from a very unusual viewpoint – between the seats of the driver and co-driver. This means that as well as seeing the road and all the dials on the dashboard, you can also see the co-driver's clipboard, upon which is a course map and stopwatch. The interior of the car is nicely drawn and the driver is well animated when he changes gear – yes, he does that!

Control is straightforward: left and right steers, and forward and back accelerates and decelerates. Fire and forward or back changes gear – going up through the gears is smooth and realistic (you have to keep an eye on the rev counter), but the action of changing down causes an excessive loss of revs, and the car tends to slow right down. This can be annoying, and I'd also would have liked an option to change from fourth to second.

The road is twisting and hilly, and this is displayed very convincingly with a smooth 3D update. Roadside obstacles and other cars aren't particularly well drawn, but the overall effect is realistic and gives a great feeling of exhilaration.

The rally takes place over five legs, each of which comprises three consecutive stages. To get a placing, all three stages have to be completed within a specified time limit. Cash prizes are offered for first, second and third places – nothing for less. The stages vary from normal road conditions to mountain routes, and even through the night. Weather conditions vary, making offroad tracks slippery, and fog can even descend (and if you haven't bought a good set of foglamps, your vision is impaired).

The car can take a certain amount of punishment (crashing into roadside obstacles causes it to stop, and minor damage is sustained), but crashing off the side of a mountain or repeated accidents causes irrepairable damage, and the car is disqualified from the race.

The player may race as often as he likes, but must ensure a regular supply of money to keep the car in good repair, and also to buy equipment to gain advantage over the opposition.

Programmers Rad Rat have incorporated quite a few novel features into this simulation to make it different from the multitude of other computer race games on the market. The trivia option is both educational and fun, and having to keep an eye on your money and the condition of the car adds plenty of depth to the action.

Racing itself is fast and thrilling, with the best controls I've encountered in any computer race game. The highly convincing car interior (every dial works) and the realistic driver work extremely well, and the whole thing is enjoyable, thoroughly engrossing, and comes highly recommended.

ST	
► GRAPHICS	82%
► SOUND	67%
► VALUE	73%
► PLAYABILITY	88%
► OVERALL	83%

UPDATE . . .

Amiga and IBM PC versions are available now. It's the usual story – gameplay the same; the graphics and sound are slightly better on the Amiga, and worse on the PC.

MENACE



▲ *Sneaky snake shooting.*

► **MACHINES: ATARI ST/AMIGA/C64.**
► **PRICES: ST/AMIGA £19.95, C64 £9.99 CASS, £12.99 DISK.**
► **SUPPLIER: PSYCLAPSE.**
► **VERSION TESTED: ST.**
► **REVIEWER: CIARAN BRENNAN.**

The planet Draconia is an unnatural place. Created over the centuries by six of the most evil despots in the Galaxy, it has since been used as a base for some of the most infamous evil-doing in the universe. Your bosses have finally decided that enough is enough, but instead of sending in a massive battle fleet to finish the place off, they've opted instead to send you in on a solo mission – either they're pretty short of resources, or they're looking for a good way to get rid of you.

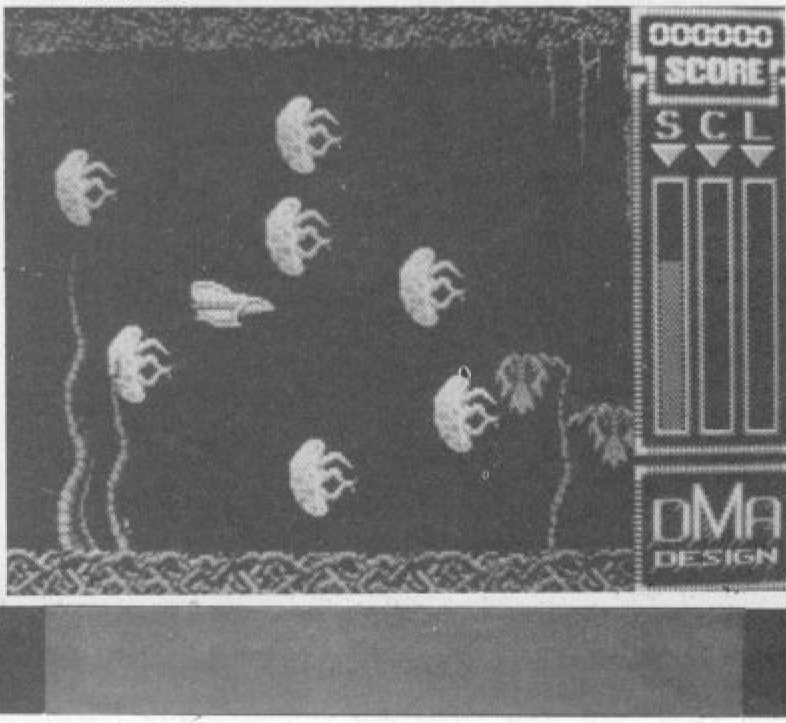
Draconia itself is composed of six left to right scrolling levels, housing up to 60 different alien types. Contact with these aliens depletes your shields, and no shields means no prizes as even the slightest contact is enough to destroy an unprotected ship. Each of the six levels leads to one of the demonic guardians – finish him off with a few carefully aimed blasts and it's off to the next, tougher, level.

Using this wonder of modern science, your ship has the ability to collect space debris and convert it into add-ons for your ship's systems and weapons. These add-ons are collected by picking up the space debris (well, icons actually) which appear when enemy formations are destroyed. These icons always appear as 1,000 point bonuses, but shooting them repeatedly upgrades them in the following order: Cannon, Laser, Speed, Outrider, Force Field and finally Shield Replenisher.

And that's just about all the game description that's really necessary – it's a 'simple shoot the aliens and collect the icons' type game with no real surprises. The options available to modify the game to each individual's taste include the choice of two game types: Novice and Expert. The only difference between these is that the scenery must be avoided in expert mode. Otherwise the usual options appear: sound on/off, effects on/off and a choice of joystick or mouse control.

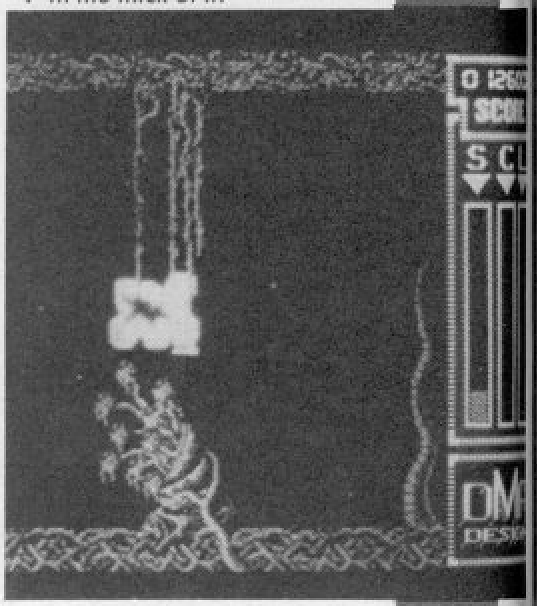
So if Menace is such an ordinary game, why did I enjoy it so much? I'm generally of the school that believes that games released on the 16-bit computers should be programmed to the highest possible specifications.

▼ *What's that?*



Ultimately, however the bottom line for a shoot 'em up is playability – and Menace's is pitched perfectly. Menace is unlikely to win any awards for technical excellence or for the advancement of science, but it is a playable and addictive blast, with enough depth built in to make it last.

▼ *In the thick of it.*



ST	
► GRAPHICS	63%
► SOUND	61%
► VALUE	78%
► PLAYABILITY	82%
► **OVERALL**	**73%**

UPDATE . . .

The Amiga version, which was the first available, is actually not as playable as its ST counterpart, so it may be a good idea to 'try before you buy'. The only other version planned is for the C64 – but as usual, we'll keep you informed of any further developments.

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ROBO

GAME OF THE MONTH C+VG

► MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64/ST/AMIGA.
► SUPPLIER: OCEAN.
► PRICE: SPEC £8.95 CASS, AMS/C64 £9.95 CASS, ST £19.95, AMIGA £24.95.
► VERSION TESTED: SPEC.
► REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.

Robocop is undoubtedly the hottest video release this Christmas, and Ocean are hoping to cash in on its phenominal success with their computer adaptation of the blockbusting film.

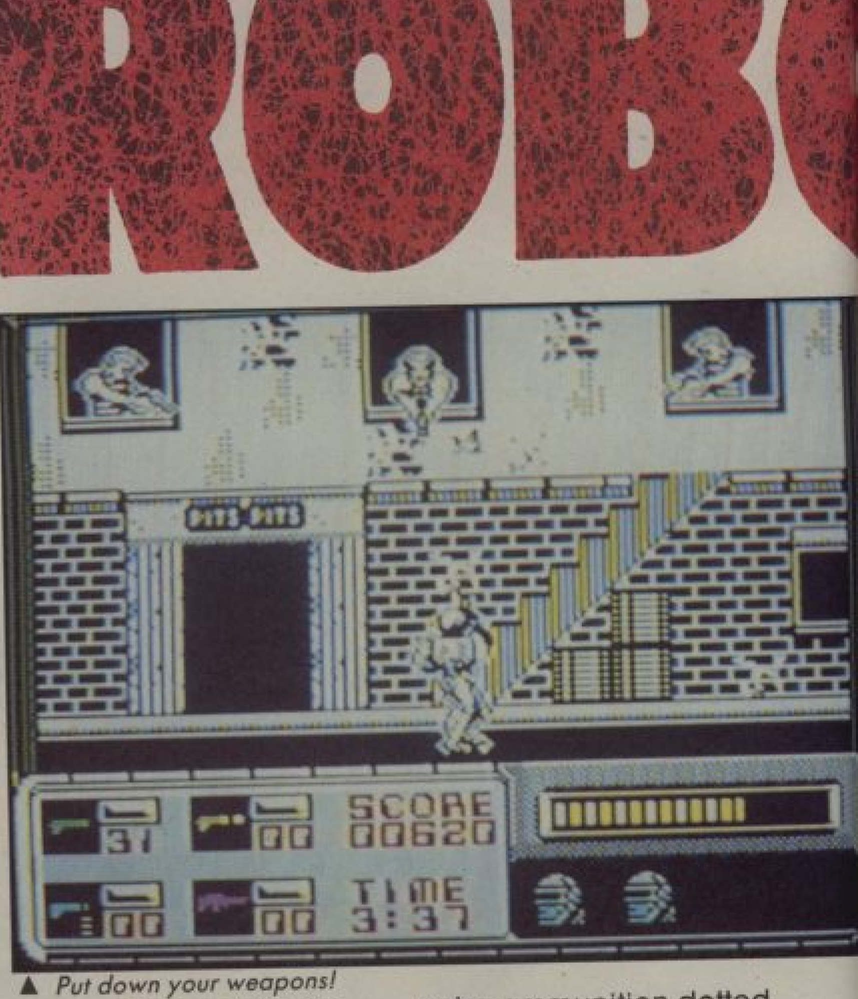
The scene is Detroit, some time into the future. Crime is rife, and the police force, now privatised and owned by the omnipotent OCP Corporation, is pushed to their limits. Body armour and full-face visors are mandatory, and a policeman's life is cheap.

When the central character, Murphy, is gunned down in a particularly grisly incident, his body – declared clinically dead – is requisitioned by OCP for use in their Robocop project. The result is Robocop, an unstoppable and emotionless cybernetic law enforcer that's half man, half machine and, to coin a phrase, all cop.

At first all goes well, but when Robocop malfunctions and begins to remember Murphy's memories, he embarks on a mission to track down and destroy the gang members who shot him. And this is where the game starts.

There are nine levels in all, each one recreating a scene in the film. Because there are so many levels, the game is multiload, although Spectrum +3 owners have the luxury of the whole game loading in one go.

The first scene is a horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up with Robocop walking along a street taking pot-shots at the hordes of armed hooligans who are marauding around. They return fire, which reduces Robocop's energy meter if he sustains hits. If his bar is diminished entirely one of his three lives is lost.



▲ *Put down your weapons!*

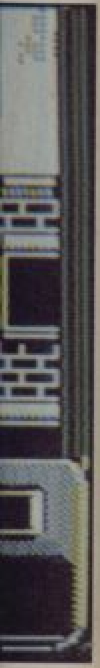
Ammunition is limited, rounds remaining shown numerically at the bottom of the screen, but there's extra ammunition dotted around the landscape. There are also extra weapons which can be picked up and used against the enemy – my favourite is the mega-bazooka which blows away dozens of villains!

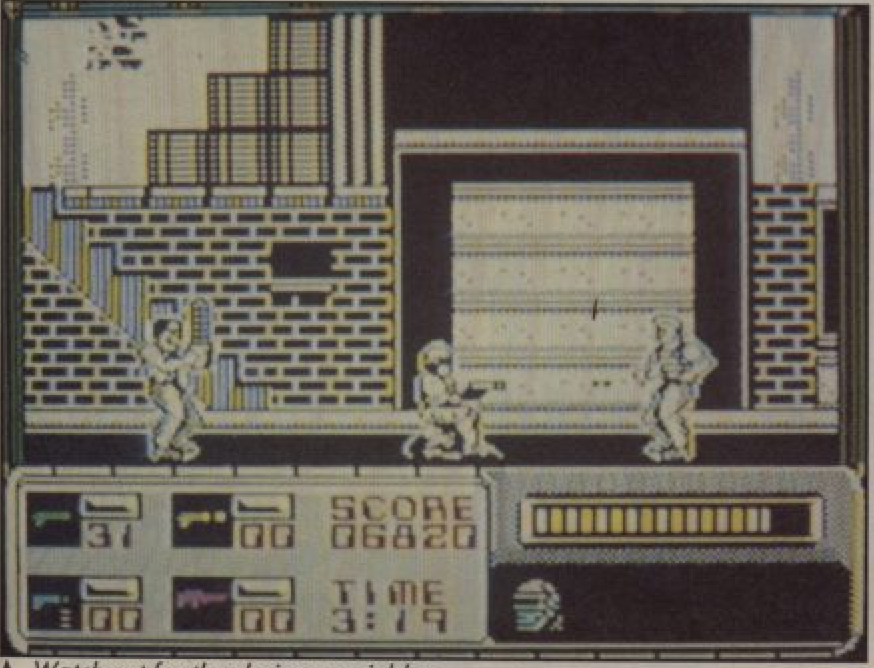
When Robocop has walked far enough, he turns into a side alley and the second level begins, which is seen through the eyes of Robocop in first person 3D. At the end of the alley is a thug who has to be apprehended – but he's using a woman to shield himself. By using Robocop's crosshair sights,

▼ *A precision shot, just like the film.*


▼ *End of level one.*


OCOP





▲ *Watch out for the chainsaw wielder.*

the player has to shoot the thug several times as he moves left and right. Shooting the woman reduces Robocop's energy bar severely. I particularly enjoyed this sequence, as it requires split-second reflexes and timing to get in that crucial shot – the graphics and feel are also superb.

Next is another scrolling shoot out, with motorcyclists entering the fray, followed by a photofit session. Here the player has to match the picture of a felon with identical photofit components: eyes, ears, hair, nose and mouth, within a 30 second time limit. It's quite tricky, as all the bits look very similar, and failure results in loss of a life. Just to make things more difficult, there's a pool of faces, and the computer chooses one randomly. It's a neat idea, and breaks up the blasting perfectly.

More shooting next, this time with vertically scrolling sections as Robocop climbs the steps of a warehouse. Next comes a confrontation with Dick Jones, the evil Senior President of OCP, and his robotic killing machine ED-209. More shooting follows as Robocop escapes from OCP Tower, followed by *even more* blasting in a junkyard. The game reaches its climax with the final showdown between Dick Jones and Robocop – who will win?

Robocop is one of my favourite films, and Ocean's tie-in captures its atmosphere perfectly – I don't think they could have done a better job. The fabulous graphics certainly help, and there's even digitised speech from the film, although it's a bit scratchy. The gameplay is tough, but it's very addictive, and there's plenty of variety, with straightforward shooting, a reflex test and a puzzle game to test the player. The game is also brilliantly presented, with an introductory sequence straight from the film – when Robocop is first powered up – and the multiload is swift and painless.

This is definitely the best film tie-in to date, and is an utterly superb game in its own right – don't miss it.

SPECTRUM

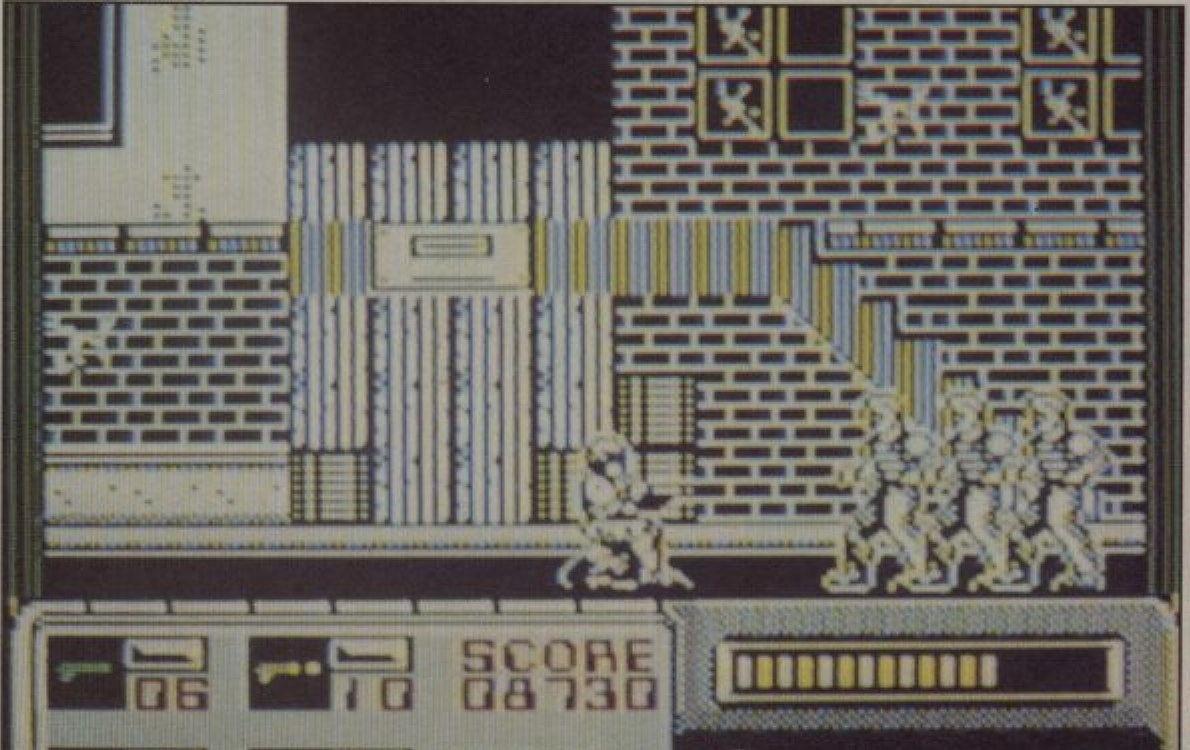
► GRAPHICS	93%
► SOUND	89%
► VALUE	88%
► PLAYABILITY	94%
► **OVERALL**	**95%**

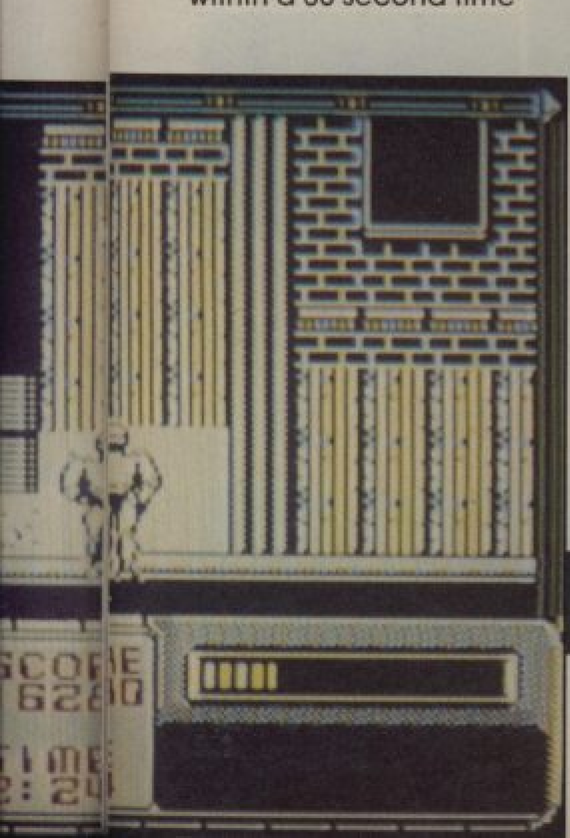
UPDATE . . .

Being an intelligent sort of company, Ocean have used the same game design on all formats. Consequently, all versions play the same and differ only in graphical presentation. The 16-bit versions are the most impressive of all, and will feature more speech than the 8-bit.

Definitely a game to look out for on any computer.

▼ *Halt, or I fire.*





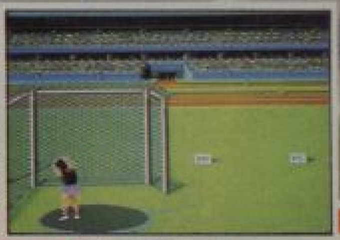
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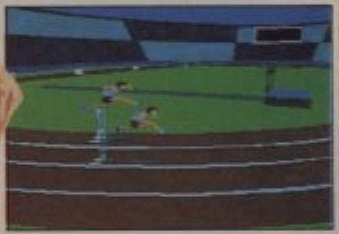
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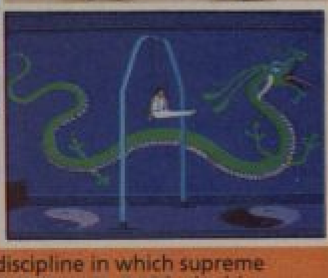


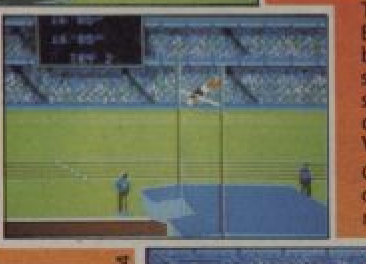
You must be graceful and quick. You'll require deadly accuracy and nerves of steel. You'll need strength, stamina, artistic, and physical skills. And above all else you'll need the will and determination to be a winner!




CBM64


IBM PC


IBM PC


CBM64

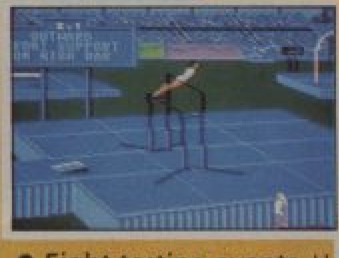
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Eight thrilling and testing events stand between you and the pinnacle of sporting fame! On the track combine speed, strength and rhythm in the explosive **HURDLES**. Now engage in a spectacular test of sheer human power as you compete for the longest distance in the **HAMMER THROW**. Then reach for the sky in the **POLE VAULT.** Stretch to clear that near impossible bar!

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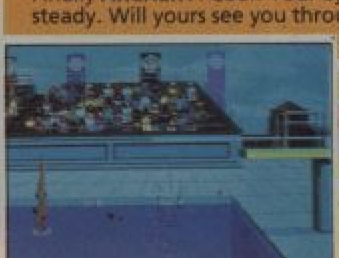
VELODROME SPRINT CYCLING will see you locked in a tough physical and psychological battle. And then perhaps the most nerve jangling event of all — **SPRINGBOARD DIVING**. You'll really need to psych yourself up for this one!

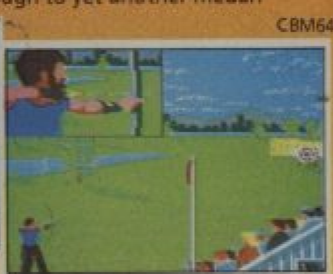
Finally **ARCHERY**. Cool. Your eye must be accurate and your arm steady. Will yours see you through to yet another medal?




CBM64


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Reviews

ZAK McKRA
ALIEN M

► **MACHINES: C64/IBM PC/APPLE.**
► **SUPPLIER: US GOLD.**
► **PRICE: £14.95.**
► **VERSION TESTED: C64.**
► **REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.**

US Gold has just signed a deal with Lucasfilm Games to distribute its top quality software over here. The first of the disk-only products is an absolutely hilarious little number that goes by the unassuming title of *Zak McKraken and The Alien Mindbenders*.

Zak is a small-time newspaper journo, working for the National Inquisitor. As a newspaper, The Inquisitor is about as much use as the Sunday Sport. It doesn't carry any real stories – the editor sits down, thinks of something exciting, and then gets one of the journos to write it up.

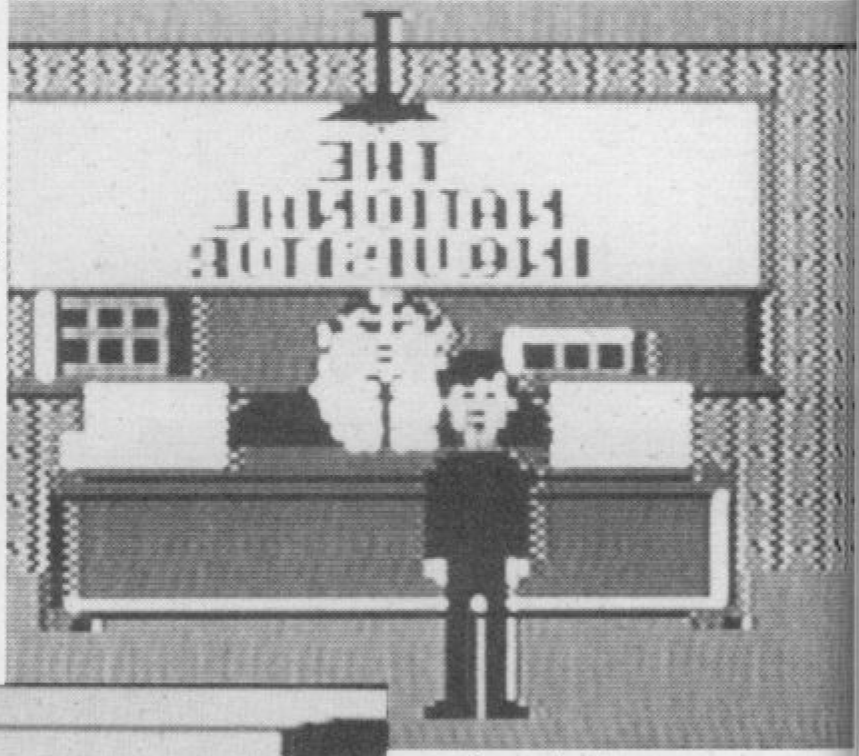
At the start of the game (although interactive movie would be a much more apt description), we see our hero deep in conversation with the editor. It's in this short and funny scene that Zak is given his first appalling task: to write up the tale of the terrible two-headed squirrel that's been frightening all the locals and tourists in Seattle. He collects his ticket and goes home to get some rest before his flight the next day. While in bed he has a dream, and it's in this dream that we pick up a few clues to the game. But I won't tell you what they are.

What Zak has to do is save the Earth from aliens that are slowly but surely turning everybody stupid. To do this they have penetrated every phone line on the planet with a 60 hertz hum which is slowly making everybody as thick as, well, something that's really thick.

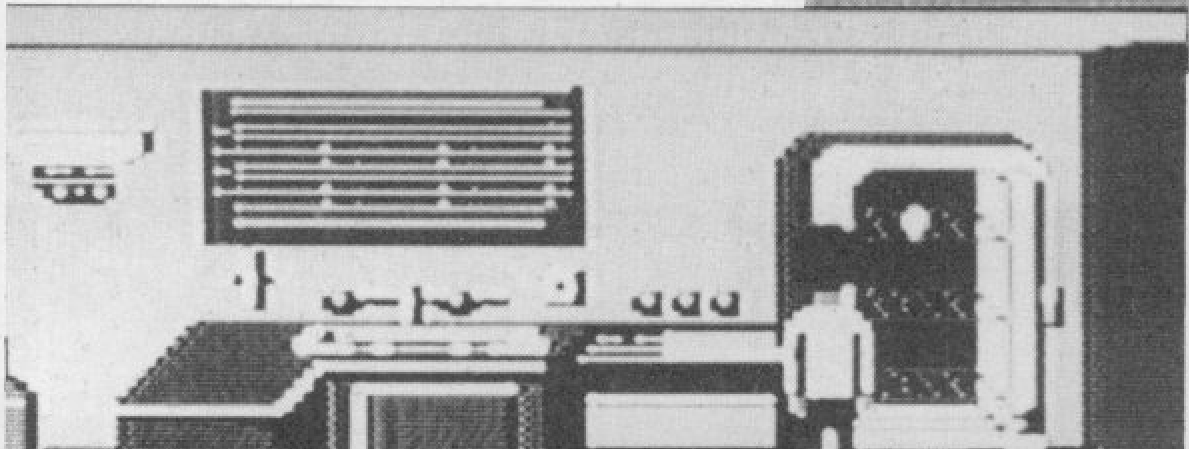
The control system is along the same lines as Lucas film's earlier effort, *Maniac Mansion*. A group of verbs at the bottom of the screen tell you what Zak is capable of doing, and a list of objects below tell you what he can do it with. You control a cursor on screen with which you guide Mr McKraken to places, point out objects (to open a door, click on the verb 'open' and then click the pointer over the door). The cursor can identify most objects and you are given quite a bit of leeway as to how you operate them.

There's also quite a bit of artificial intelligence built into the program. For example, you can work about three steps ahead of

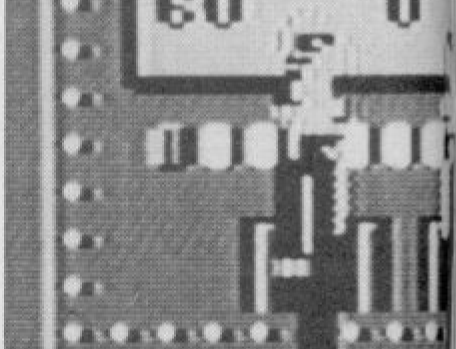
▼ *Zak is wild.*



▼ *What's in the fridge?*



▼ *Some alien banter.*



AKEN AND THE MINDBENDERS

yourself. Just say you want to lever the plastic card out from under the desk with the phone bill. Click on the verb 'use', then click on the phone bill in the drawer, and then click on the plastic card. The computer will then work out that you have to walk over the bill, pick it up, walk over to the card, and then level it out. It's with this kind of thinking ahead that the action doesn't become tedious.

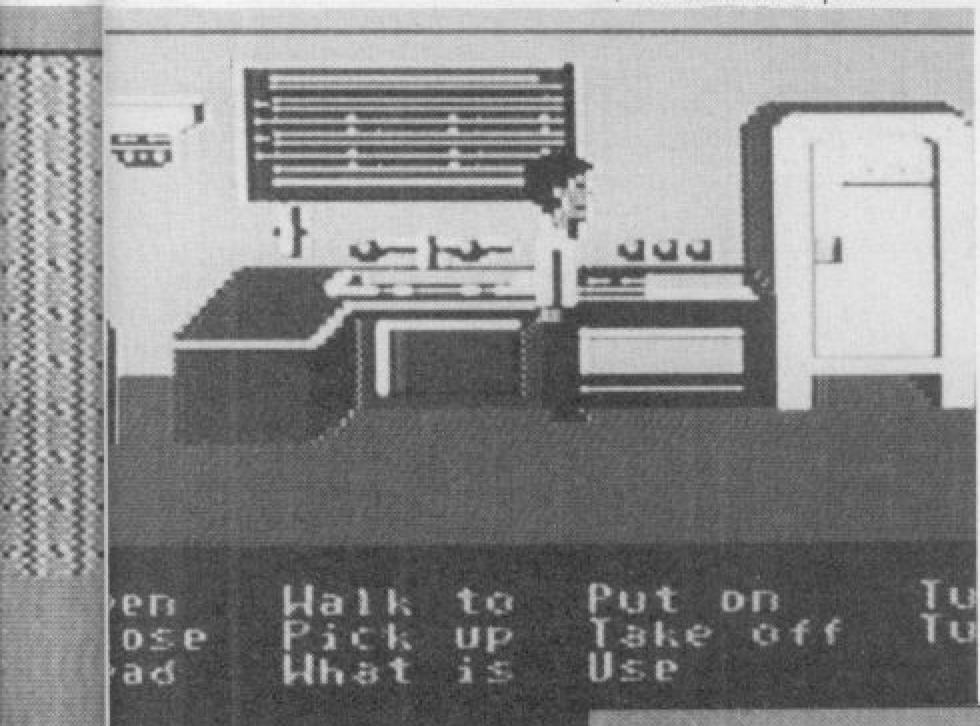
The game is very, very funny. Every now and again, the scene changes to a completely different one, giving the impression of watching a film. The extra scenes are put in to let you know what else is going on in the world. For example, the action switches to the alien watching over the Stupid Machine. This alien gets dimmer and dimmer as you go through the game, and he gets funnier and funnier; his Elvis impression had me rolling about. As for getting Zak to go the toilet on the plane – this has to be seen.

The puzzles are well thought out; never too difficult as to oppress, but hard enough to keep you thinking.

Zak McKraken is definitely worth keeping an eye out for. The only thing that mars it is the large amount of disk access, but maybe that can't be helped. Shame it's disk only – all you cassette owners are going to miss out.

Now where was I? Oh yes, I'm just a hound dogging, meat tendering, sheep worrying son of a lonely gun . . .

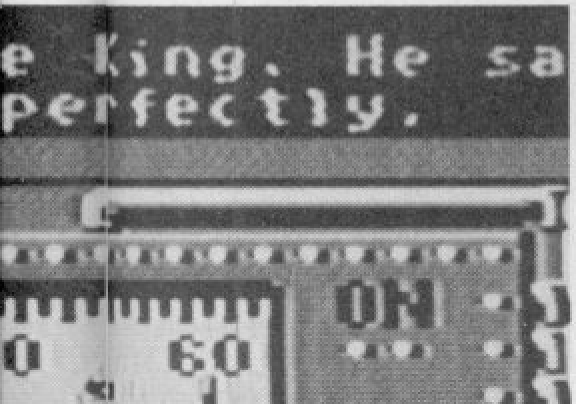
▼ *In the kitchen at parties.*



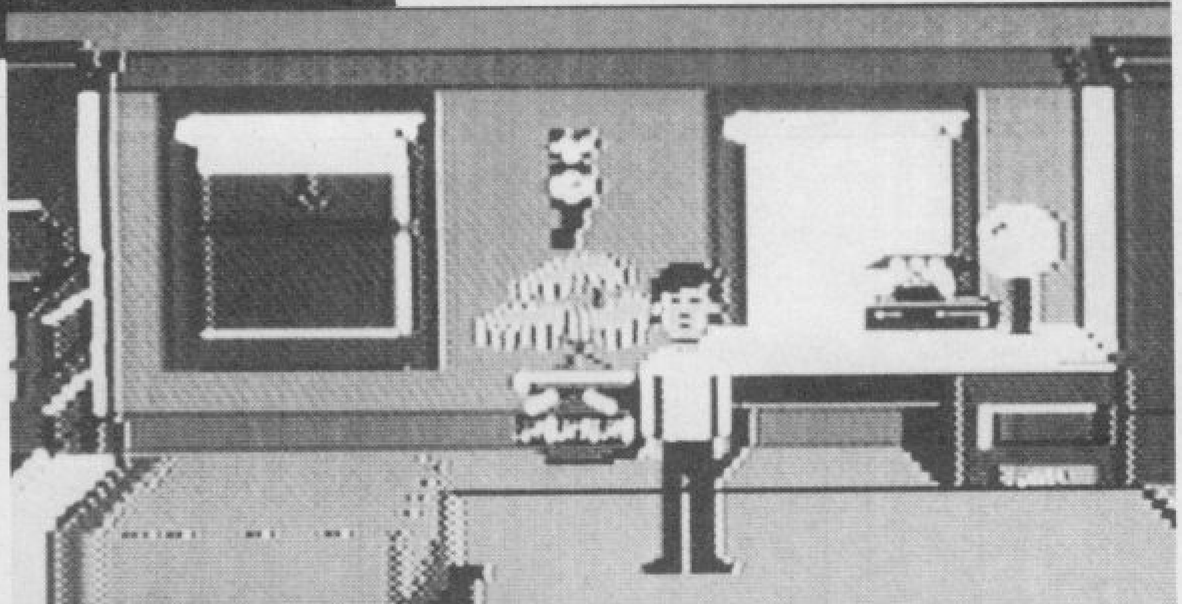
C64	
► GRAPHICS	75%
► SOUND	65%
► VALUE	81%
► PLAYABILITY	89%
► **OVERALL**	**85%**

UPDATE . . .

Zak McKraken will be launched in the New Year on the 64 and IBM PC and compatibles. No decision has yet been made on a Spectrum version.



▼ *Walk to where?*



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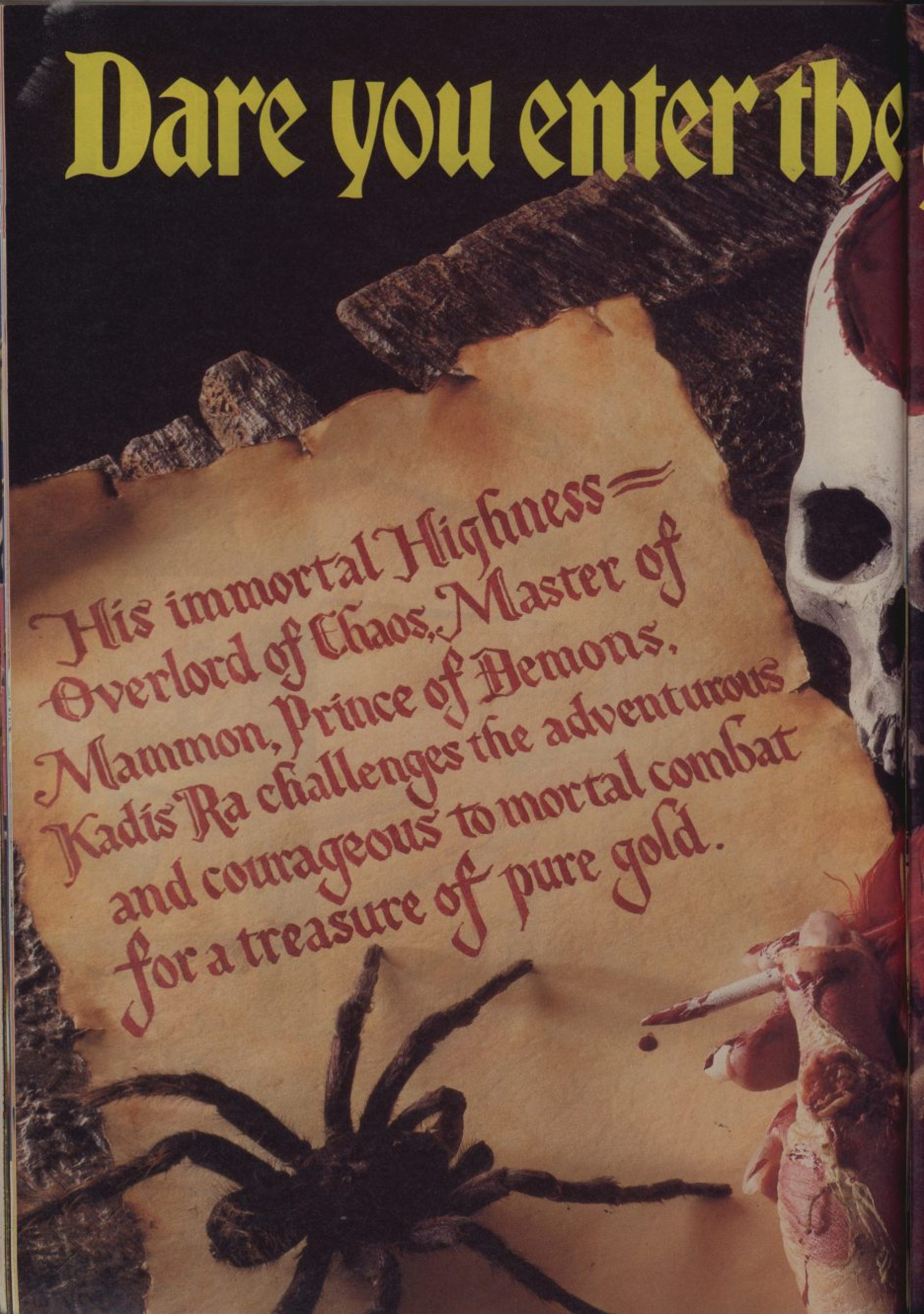
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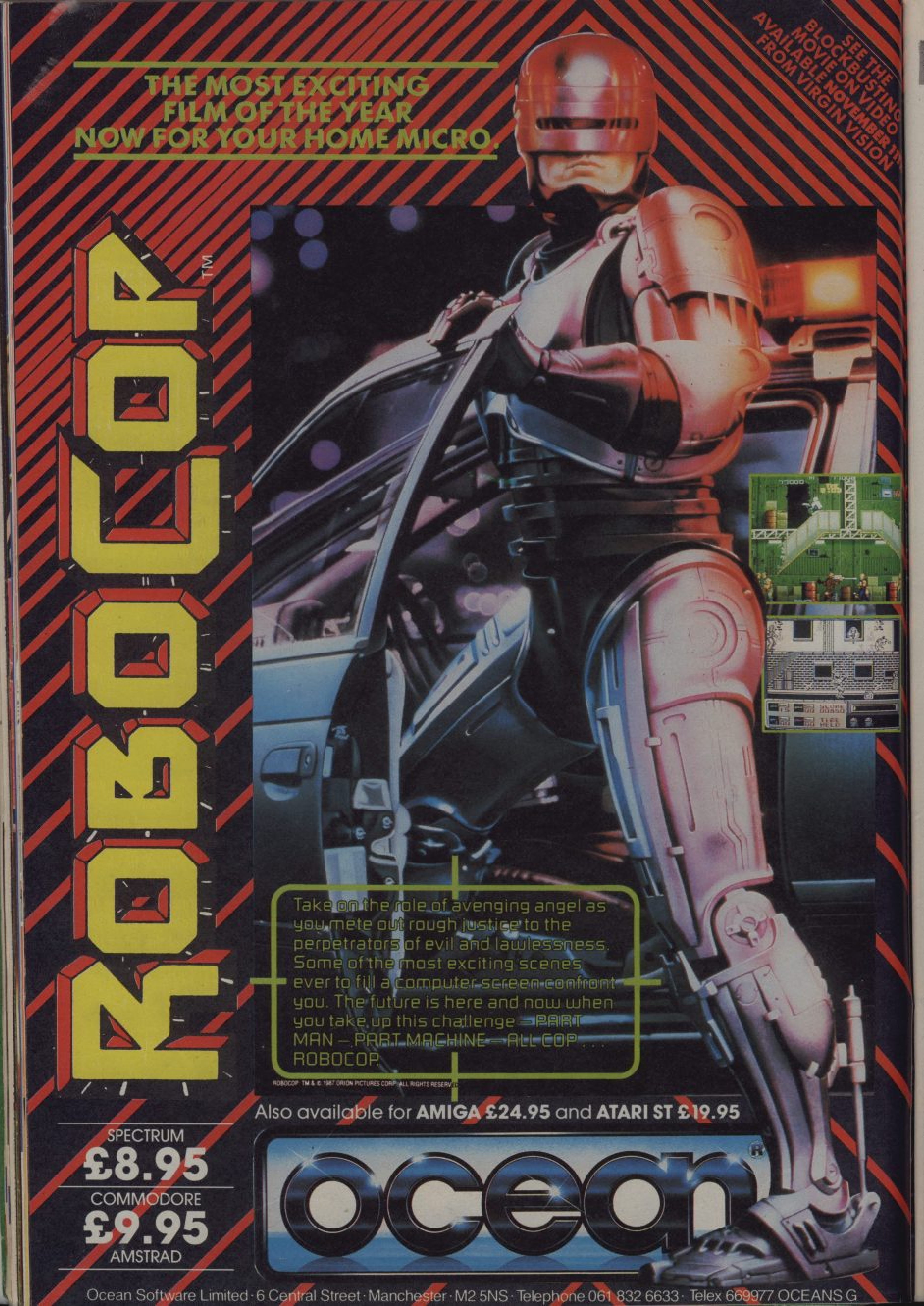
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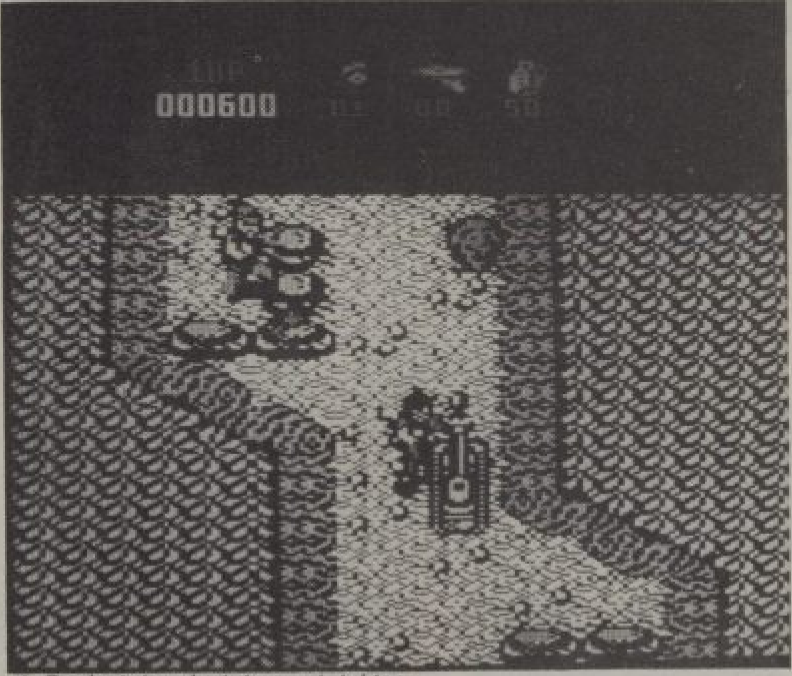
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GUERILLA WAR



▲ *Tanks 'n' rocks 'n' guns 'n' things.*

► MACHINES: ST/AMIGA/SPECTRUM/C64/AMSTRAD.
► SUPPLIER: IMAGINE.
► PRICES: SPEC £8.95, C64/AMS £9.95, AMIGA £24.95, ST £19.95.
► VERSION TESTED: AMSTRAD.
► REVIEWER: CIARAN BRENNAN.

Having scored a couple of hits with *Ikari Warriors* and its follow-up, *Victory Road*, SNK's next outing into the arcades was *Guerilla War*,. another one or two-player scrolling fighting game. Although it may not have scored highly for originality, the coin-op was colourful and, most importantly, really playable. This was one of my favourite coin-ops this year, so the news that the conversion was in Imagine's capable hands pleased me no end. But what a surprise I was in for . . .

Set on a tropical island, the object is to guide a gùerilla (or two) through town and jungle in an effort to free the paradise from the cruel oppression of an evil dictator. Mercenaries appear at every corner, armed to the teeth and determined to put a stop to your progress.

Along the way there are a number of hostages to be freed and extra weapons to collect, including flame throwers, bazookas and even tanks! These are collected by walking across them, and last for 50 shots or until you bite the dust – whichever comes soonest. However, rescuing a hostage renews your ammunition (or fuel if you're driving) and adds a meaty 1,000 points to your collection.

So with all of this in mind, I stepped off into the unknown to try to beat the dictator. And this is where the problems started. Firstly the graphics are so indistinct that it took a couple of seconds before I knew which way the character was facing . . . and you can't hang around for a couple of seconds in a game like this . . . uuuuurgh! One life lost.

The next character appears and it's off towards the enemy at last. The trouble is that the play area is so small that you don't know if there's anyone ahead until too late . . . aaaargh! Second life gone.

Back to the start again – and a few minutes later I'm actually in a tank and steaming off through the jungle. What's this approaching? It's only a foot soldier with a gun – no problem . . . BOOOM! Third and final life up the spout. How can that happen? My tank has been destroyed after approximately 1.5 pico-seconds by a foot soldier!

And *Guerilla War* carried on and on like this for just as long as I tried to get to grips with it. Even the inclusion of a 'rotate' mode of play (which is supposed to imitate the swivel heads of the original's joysticks) doesn't help matters as this is, if anything, even worse than standard set-up.

It's been a long long time since an Imagine product has disappointed me to this degree. A perfectly playable and entertaining coin-op has been chewed up and spat out as a flickering and stuttering mess. If you really want a game of this type then check out *Victory Road* . . . it can only be better.

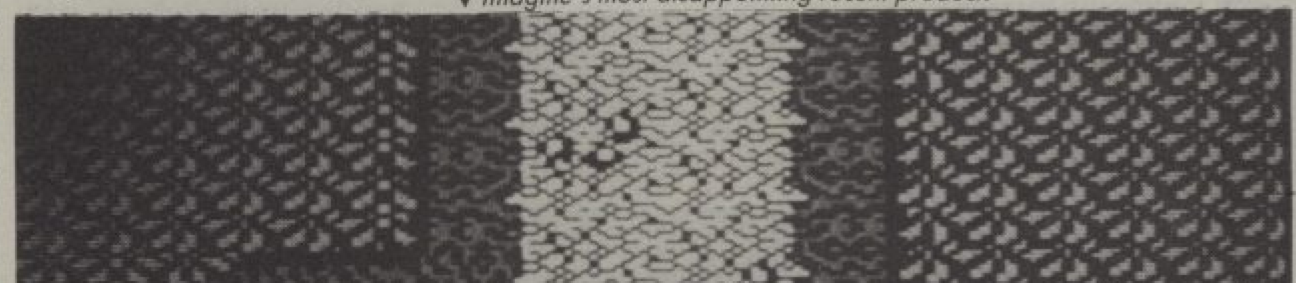
AMSTRAD	
► GRAPHICS	44%
► SOUND	37%
► VALUE	22%
► PLAYABILITY	32%
► OVERALL	**23%**

C64	
► GRAPHICS	52%
► SOUND	37%
► VALUE	17%
► PLAYABILITY	19%
► OVERALL	**17%**

UPDATE . . .

Spectrum is just as ghastly as the other versions, but apparently the 16-bit versions are pretty good. This we'll have to see . . .

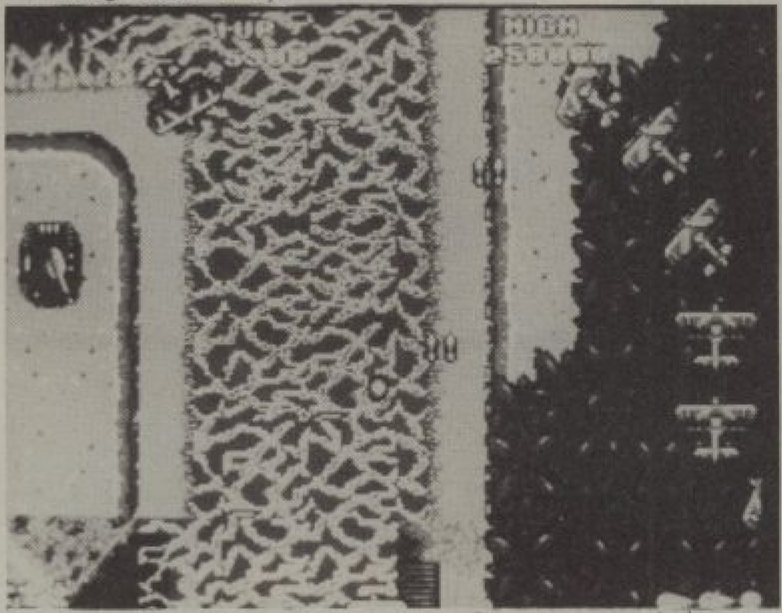
▼ *Imagine's most disappointing recent product.*



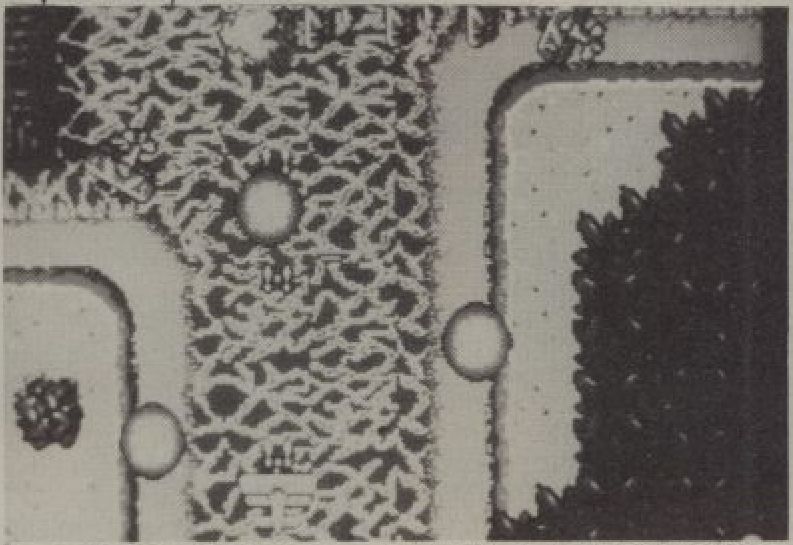
Reviews

► **MACHINES: ATARI ST, SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD, ST £24.95, SPECTRUM £7.95, C64 £8.95, £12.95 DISK, AMSTRAD £8.95, £14.95 DISK.**
► **SUPPLIER: FIREBIRD.**
► **REVIEWER: CIARAN BRENNAN.**

▼ Tough shoot 'em up.



▼ Power-ups are vital.



FLYING SHARK

Flying Shark caused quite a stir when it was launched a couple of years back – which now seems a bit strange when you consider that all you are really talking about is a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up – albeit a particularly good one.

You are at the controls of a World War I bi-plane flying low over an ever-changing terrain.

As you fly up-screen the enemy scroll down towards you attacking from the sky as well as the ground. You need eyes in the back of your head and a good memory to remember their attack patterns if you are going to get anywhere in Flying Shark.

The first impression of the game is "blimey this is tough." Unlike some other vertically scrolling blasters on the ST Flying Shark is incredibly mean with its power ups.

When you finally manage to blast a whole squadron of red planes a power up will appear – but it is no simple matter of flying into it. It wanders all over the screen so you have to track it carefully – blasting any other enemy tanks or planes that may be around it.

▼ Flying Shark – bi plane mayhem.



There is one generous saving grace though – you are given three super weapons at the beginning of the game – represented by three flame icons at the bottom right of the screen.

Tap space bar and four flaming balls appear spinning around your plane – killing anything that moves. These are useful for blowing up the armoured fortresses with their hidden tanks.

Extra super weapons can be picked up by collecting the letter 'B' power-ups that appear every so often.

The over head graphics are very pretty and similar to the arcade original. Lush jungle forests – with tanks appearing from clearings and gun boats in rows of three in a bright blue ocean. There is no question mark about the graphics in this conversion.

The doubts that I have are with the speed with which the game plays – it does appear a bit slow and jerky at some stages. Not that this makes the game any easier to play – the basic game design makes sure you're not going to clock Shark in a few sittings.

On quite a few occasions my plane disappeared below the level of the screen and I was killed. That seemed very unfair as how could I be expected to dodge the flak if I couldn't even see my plane?

Still that's a small point really – and a design fault that was also in the coin-op original. Presumably the conversion team went for a 'warts and all' conversion.

So – to buy or not to buy? If you were crazy about the coin-op then definitely yes. This is a more than competent conversion.

If, however, you are just looking for a good scrolling shoot 'em up for your ST then I would consider Xenon by Melbourne House instead. It has the edge in playability and graphics.

ST

► GRAPHICS	75%
► SOUND	70%
► VALUE	50%
► PLAYABILITY	70%
► **OVERALL**	**75%**

UPDATE . . .

Spectrum and C64 versions of Flying Shark appeared last year and were widely acclaimed. They are now available on a number of compilations (See Compilation City guide to the best Xmas game packs). An Amiga version will appear sometime in the New Year.

Reviews

TOTAL ECLIPSE



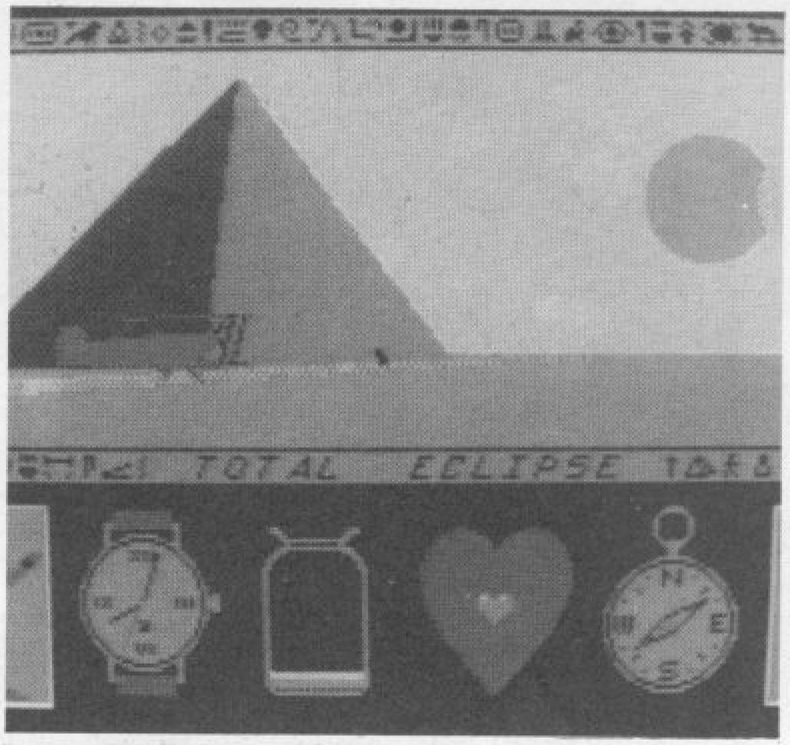
▲ *Face to face with a face.*

► MACHINES: SPEC, AMS, C64.
► SUPPLIER: INCENTIVE.
► PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £9.95 CASS.
► VERSION TESTED: AMS.
► REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.

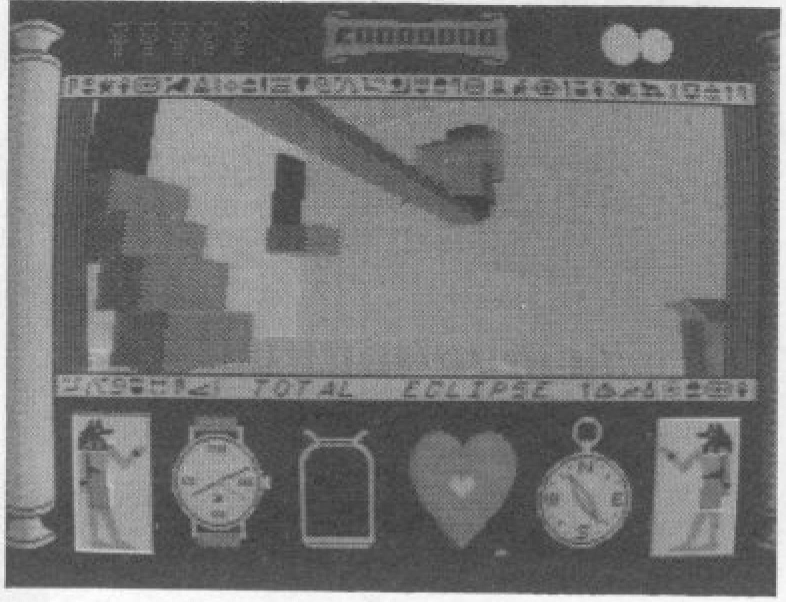
Incentive are still moving forward as far as 3D games are concerned. They got all the shape generating maths correct first time, round with *Driller*, but the main problem with all the versions was that they were slower that they should have been. *Dark Side* was a little better as far as speed was concerned, but it was still a little bland. *Total Eclipse* is a step forward in the right direction.

It features quite fast gameplay, a lot of intricate puzzles and some complex room designs. For example, in one room there's a staircase, a symbol on the wall, a pedestal with a chair on it and a few blocks scattered about. All this takes up quite a bit of RAM, but the programmer has managed to put a lot of code in a little space. The miracle of compaction.

You start standing next to a bi-plane near a large pyramid, somewhere in Egypt. If you take a look into the sky, you see most of the sun. The reason you don't see all of it is because there's an eclipse about to take place. In two hours time in fact. The reason you are there is because some cleverdick cast a curse on the pyramid. The curse is "If anything should block the sun and stop the light reaching the top of the pyramid, the blockage will be destroyed." Should the moon explode, then of course it takes the Earth with it. You have to get to the top of the pyramid and destroy the curse before it's too late.



▲ *Enter the pyramid.*



▼ *Puzzles all the way.*

Before you can start your quest, there are a few things you should take note of. Firstly, you must always watch the time. A wristwatch in the corner counts away the seconds, and you're going to need everyone. Secondly is your heartrate. Take too much damage and it speeds up dramatically. Take a rest before going any further. The final thing to take note of is your water level. In the hot climate you have to keep a constant supply of liquid passing through your body or you dry up. There is water hidden around the pyramid, but there's only a finite supply, so you can't keep going back to the same old tried and tested water trough.

The puzzles are well thought out, and mainly take the form of locked doors and magically locked doors. The locked doors have to be opened with ankhs, which are found lying around, hanging on walls, under objects etc. The magically locked doors are opened by shooting two identical hieroglyphics, which are normally in two completely different rooms at either end of the pyramid.

Mummies take the place of the laser guns in the two previous games, springing up from the floor when you step on a pressure pad or jumping out of coffins, as mummies tend to do. What you do with them is up to you to work out.

The Amstrad version is quite fast and smooth, and colour is used to good effect. One clue to getting anywhere on the game is that opposite walls are always the same colour. If they're not, maybe there's something you're missing out on?

AMSTRAD	
► GRAPHICS	83%
► SOUND	63%
► VALUE	73%
► PLAYABILITY	87%
► OVERALL	**76%**

UPDATE . . .

Total Eclipse is going to be roughly the same game on all formats. The only difference is that the Spectrum version is monochromatic (and a little faster than the Amstrad version), and the Commodore version is slightly more colourful, but very s-l-o-w.

Still, those who like the other Freescape titles will more than likely revel in this.

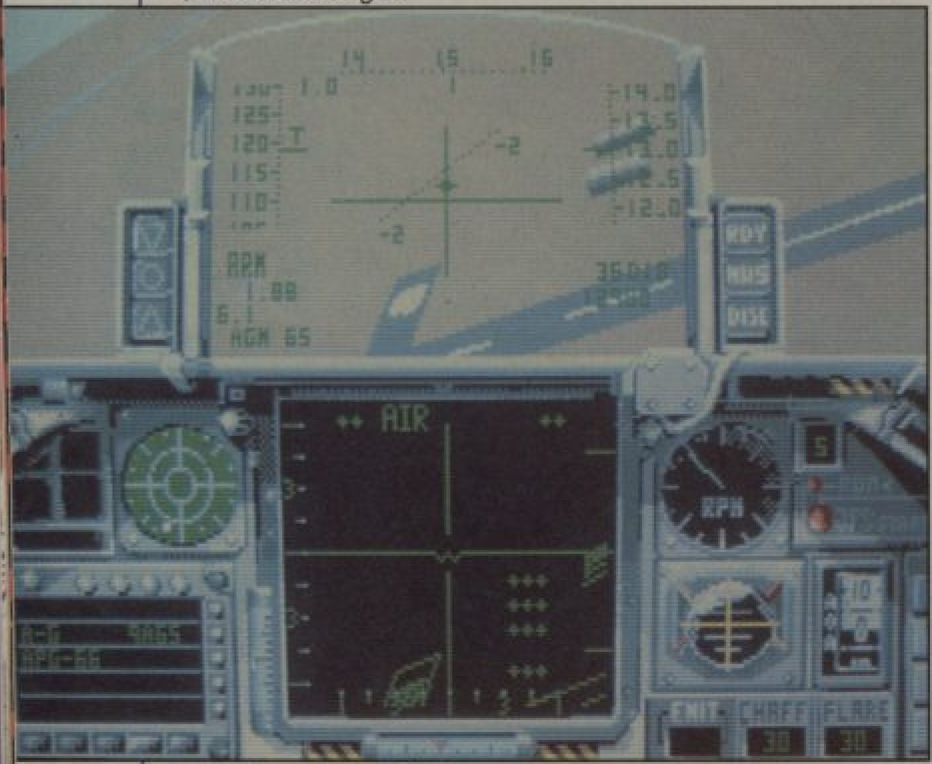
Reviews

FAL

- ► MACHINE: ST/AMIGA/PC/MACINTOSH.
- ► SUPPLIER: MIRRORSOFT.
- ► PRICE: ST £24.99, AMIGA £29.99, PC EGA £34.99, PC EGA/MAC £44.95.
- ► VERSION TESTED: ST.
- ► REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.

People say there's no advancement in the software industry. I remember, not so long ago, when Psion *Flight Simulator* was the ultimate in realism. Then came the unbelievable *Flight Simulator II* from Sublogic, which features the great scenery disks which enable you to fly almost anywhere on the globe, complete with recognisable scenery and realistic flying times. Then came *FA-18 Interceptor*, a true 16-bit action sim. It features fast smooth graphics and stacks of playability. A lot of fanatics complained because it was too simplistic in it's approach – it was just a matter of point the plane in the right direction and the computer works out all the flap and speed adjustments to ensure you don't dip groundward or lose too much speed or what have you.

▼ *In the air tonight.*



C+VG HIT!

Falcon is a simulation of the F-16 and first made an appearance on the IBM PC a while back. It was heralded as revolutionary, incredibly realistic and obtainable by both arcadesters and pilots alike. Then came Falcon AT, which makes full use of the AT's advanced graphics and speed.

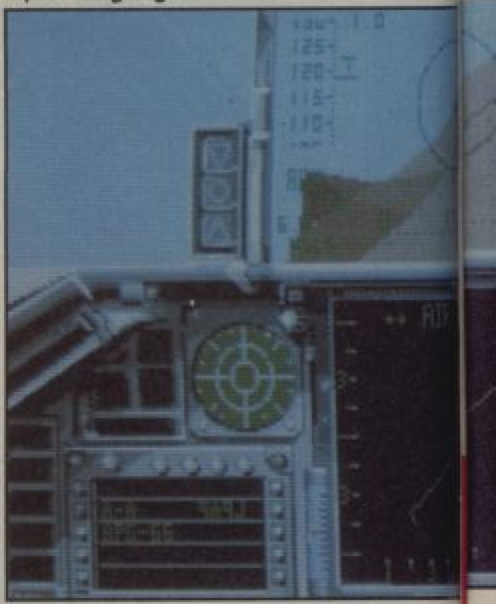
Falcon ST is even better.

Before taking off you first enter your name into the pilot's roster and select a rank. There are five ranks to choose from, all of which have a dramatic effect on the difficulty level. For example, 1st Leutenant gives you an infinite supply of all weapons and makes the plane indestructable – you can't be shot down, and should you accidentally smash into the ground, you just bounce off, and Colonel (realistic flying reactions and destruction ratios).

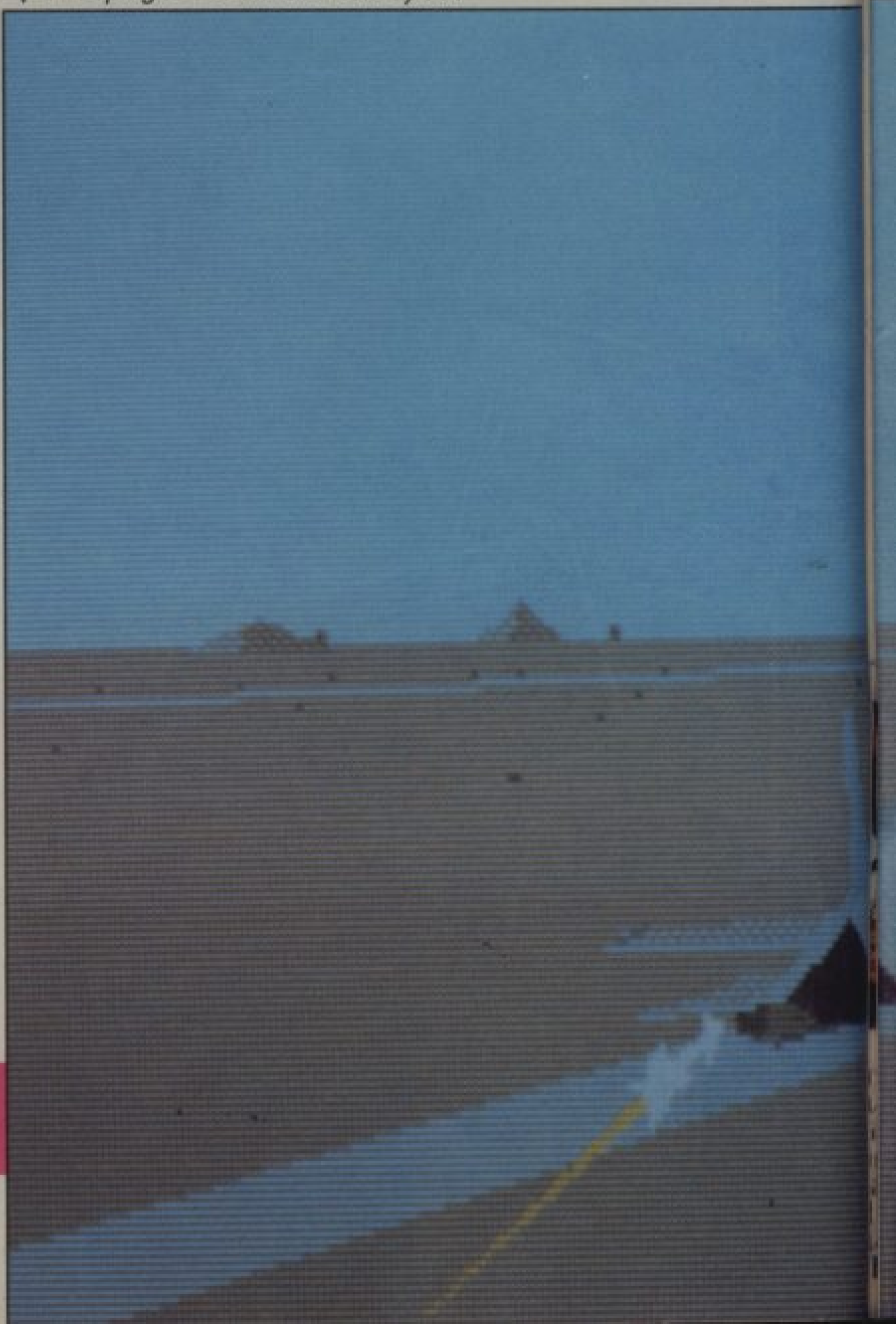
There are 12 missions, each with different objectives, maps and smatterings of the opposition. You can also set the maximum number of MiGs (Mikoyan/Guryevich-21 Soviet fighter plane) attacking you. None ensures a relatively safe flight, three is for some real man's flying. Then click on Armament to continue.

The F-16 can carry a variety of different weapons, ranging from the common Sidewinder AIM-9J AA-missile to the not so-common AIM-9L Sidewinder, which has a much more powerful heat tracking system and isn't eadily fooled by flares. It can also carry a small variety of bombs. To load the plane, click on the up arrow beneath the picture of the weapon. The groundsman then either tells you that it's been

▼ *Having a good bank.*



▼ *Swooping low to attack a convoy . . .*





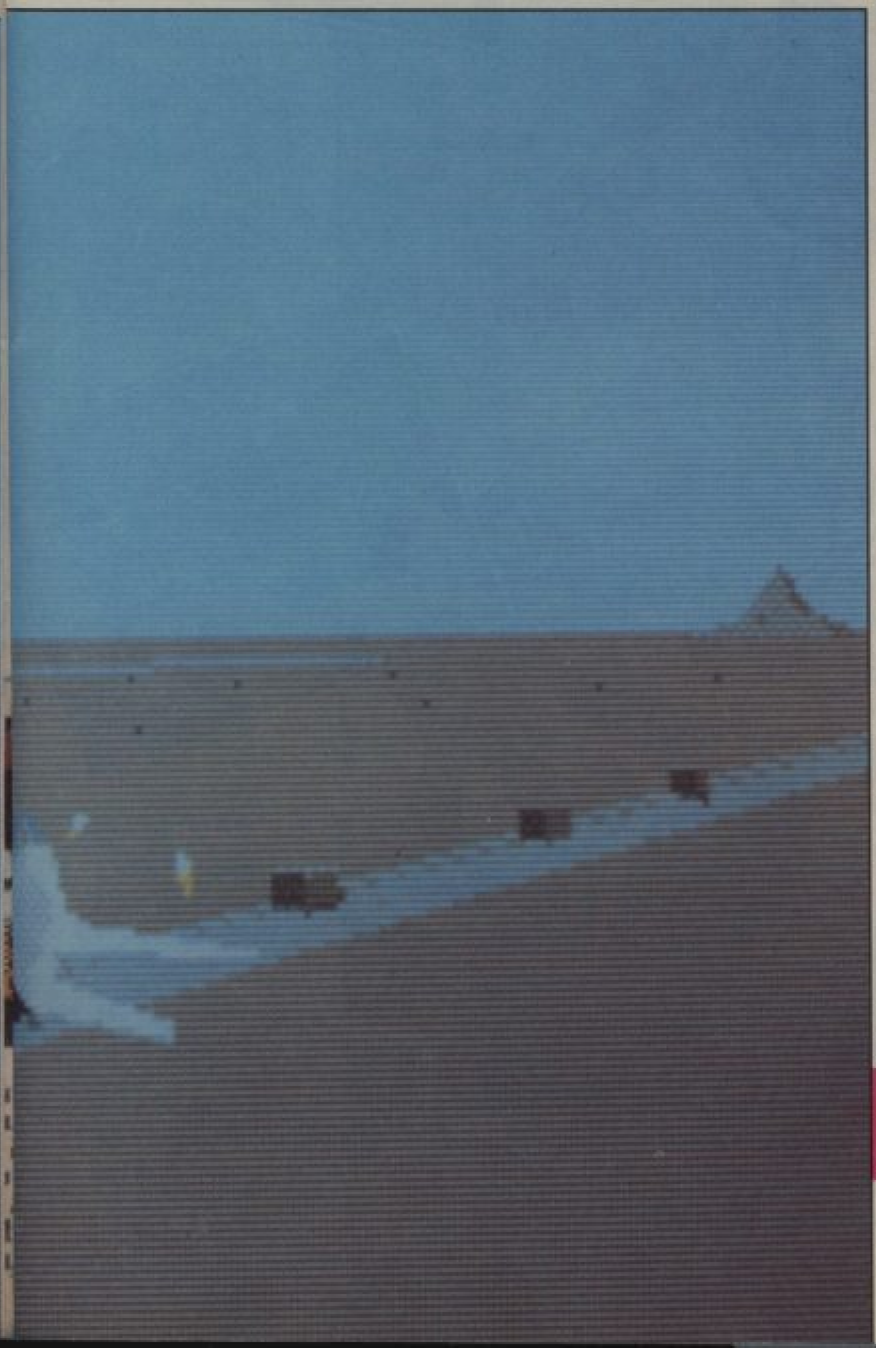
fitted, or if not, why not. Once you'r ready, it's onto the airstrip you go.

One of the things that makes Falcon special is its very fast (just spot that MiG fly past), smooth and uncannily realistic graphics. The feeling of distance is quite amazing, helped by the clever use of shadows and incredible detail. The telegraph poles that line the roads, for example, just look like sticks from a distance, but close up they are proper poles, complete with shadows and wires. I particularly like the convoy of trucks that move constantly between two points on the map.

There are a wealth of views to choose from, some are amazingly useful, others are just attractive. You can look around the realistically detailed cockpit in all four directions, as well as look up, above the control panel to give you an uncluttered view of the sky ahead. There's an external view option, which is my favourite, and you can rotate about the plane through 360°.

The aircraft's design and

CON

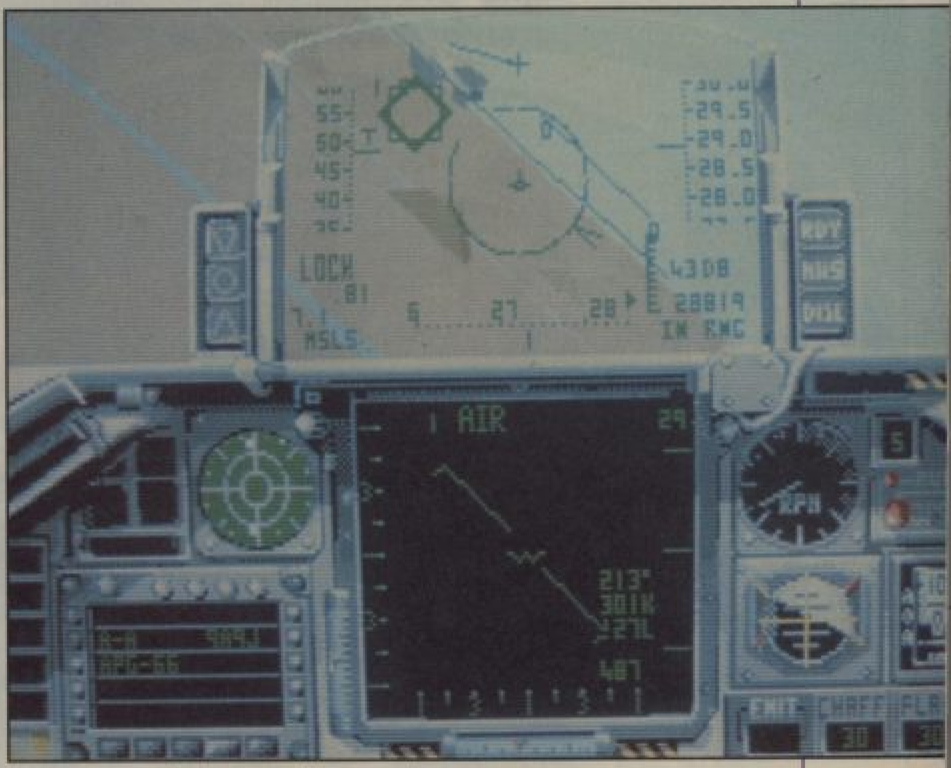


manouvreability is apparently spot-on. The cockpit is perfect, right down to the yoke and throttle under the pilot's left and right hands. The enemy is blessed with artificial intelligence, and follow the same kind of aircraft manoeuvres as real Soviet pilots use. Obviously in 1st Lieutenant mode, it's going to be a little unreal, but in Colonel mode, only the best can keep her up in the air, yet alone fight up there.

There are a wealth of options, from basic stuff like whether to display scenery dots or not, and whether to have bitchin' Betty the computer voice that calls out "Caution" when you're doing something you're not supposed to – like fly with your afterburners full on with your landing gear extended – and things like "pull up" when you're about to hit the ground.

C+VG HIT!

ST	
► GRAPHICS	94%
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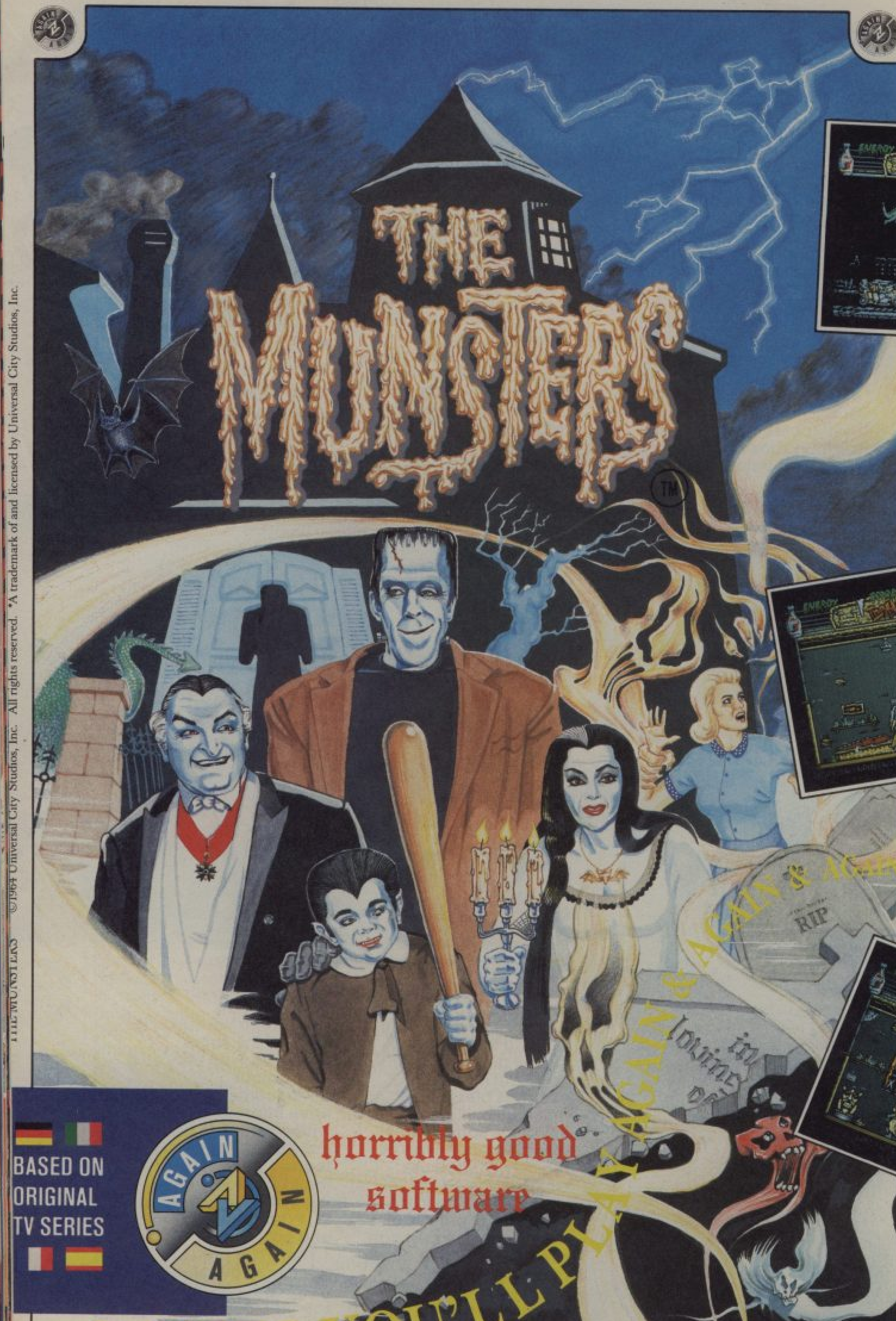


▲ *Falcon – the best simulator to date.*

UPDATE . . .

The Amiga version will feature the same graphics, with maybe a little colour enhancement. It must have improved sound, which seems to be the case as always, and will feature all the aspects of the ST version, including the option to link up to an ST, PC or another Amiga and have the ol' dogfight.

There are plans to release expansion disks which will contain new scenery, new missions, as well as up-to-date information on new planes and battle strategies.



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► **REVIEWER: MATT BIELBY.**

Should you happen to get bored with Exploding Fist+ you can flick a quick mental reset switch and play it as "Advanced Dance Simulator". This works particularly well on the Spectrum, where you can force your three would be kung fu combatants into a never ending little polka up and down the screen by simply keeping the character you control yourself in constant movement. It is thoughts such as these that sustained me through the mental wasteland of reviewing Exploding Fist+; it simply isn't a very good game.

On both Spectrum and 64 the game plays in exactly the same way. Your objective is to rise through the karate ranks to reach tenth dan, taking on faster and tougher opponents as you do so. The back drop for your fights is a simple US street scene, complete with flashing Vegas-style "Coca-Cola" signs and so forth. Points are scored by each hit, and should you take one on the chin, you will be knocked out for a few moments, indicated (on the 64) by comic book stars circling your head. A row of lights at the top of the screen indicate the points you are scoring and when one player reaches a full row of eight, positions are assessed and the top two scorers go forward. When there are no human players left the game is over.

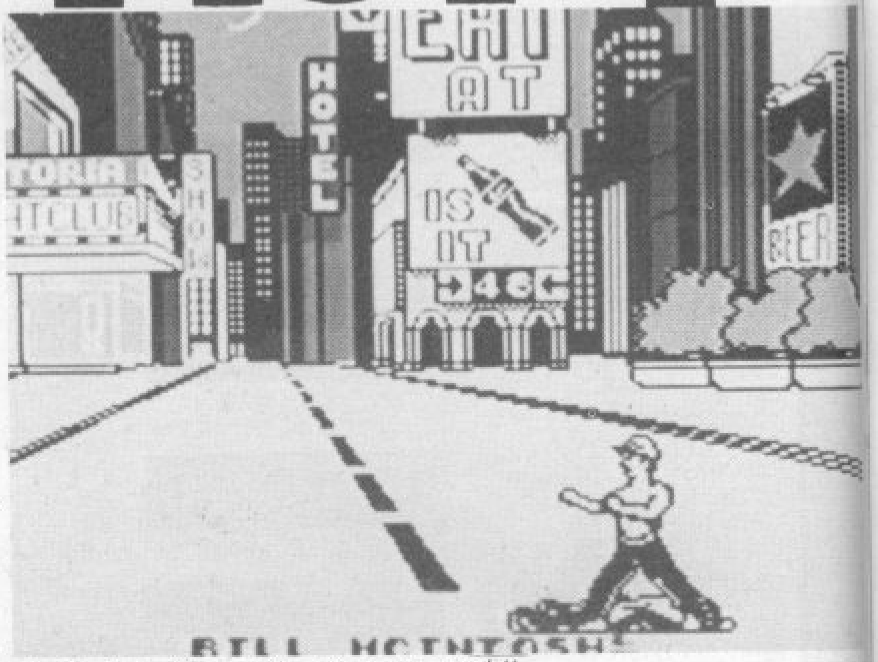
The two player option is probably most fun, as you can gang up on the machine fighter together, and get a bit of needle into your own bouts. Every couple of bouts, there is a bonus points screen which involves throwing knives at advancing Ninjas, but isn't very involving. They lurch towards you in massive jerks, and there is no attempt to recreate a throwing motion with your arm: a bit of pretty irrelevant business, really.

This is the C64 bonus game. On the Speccy it involves hitting demons who appear from behind the dustbins and windows of a dark alley by moving a cursor over their positions.

But these fiddly little details are not what makes a game like this, it is the quality of the fighting sequences. When you surrender all change in background, scrolling and adventure aspects of a beat 'em up, the fighting has to be of a really high standard. On the Spectrum the game really is sub standard: sound is weedy, sprites are rather mincing (always a bit unfortunate for something entitled "Exploding Fist") and generally I have yet to see anyone keep playing it beyond fifteen minutes.

On the other hand, the blocky, three colour sprites of the Commodore work quite well, and there is plenty of cartwheeling, fly kicking fun to be had. The number of moves are complicated so while you flick through your range to find out just whether it was lower right or top left that delivers a shin kick (it's lower right, fact fans) you are likely to find yourself decked. Should you be a beat 'em up fan you might have fun with this, if you can cope with sound that so little resembles any martial arts style yelps that people thought I was killing a cat in the games room.

However it has some stiffish martial arts competition this Christmas, and if Double Dragon was less than impressive on 8 bit (or 16 for that matter) there is still Dragon Ninja to consider. Definitely a case of having a good old look before you spend your beat 'em up pound. I'm willing to bet it wouldn't be on this rather limited and disappointing offering.



▲ *Careful with your "beat 'em up pound."*



▼ *Exploding Fist+ fails to excite.*

C64	
► GRAPHICS	65%
► SOUND	15%
► VALUE	59%
► PLAYABILITY	66%
► **OVERALL**	**58%**

SPECTRUM	
► GRAPHICS	51%
► SOUND	42%
► VALUE	49%
► PLAYABILITY	45%
► **OVERALL**	**44%**

UPDATE . . .

There will be no 16 bit versions of the game, nor will Exploding Fist+ be available on the Amstrad.

BEST OF MATES

Battle Chess
► MACHINES: IBM PC AMIGA.
► SUPPLIER: INTERPLAY/ELECTRONIC ARTS.
► PRICE: £24.95 BOTH VERSIONS.
► VERSION TESTED: AMIGA.

Colossus X.
► MACHINES: ST AMIGA.
► SUPPLIER: CDS.
► PRICE: £24.95 BOTH VERSIONS.
► VERSION TESTED: ST.

THE BEST OF MATES?

The arrival of two new chess programs in the office can only mean one thing . . . it's time for resident chess bore Ciaran Brennan to pick up the pieces and let rip.



▲ *Battle Chess.*

THE CONTENDERS

At the White end . . . Colossus Chess X, the latest in the tried and tested Colossus series from CDS. Written for the ST and Amiga by Martin Bryant (the man responsible for the 8-bit Colossus games), version X includes a number of enhancements over its predecessors, including infinite playing levels and a program that 'learns' from its opponent's moves.

And at the Black end – Interplay's Battle Chess, a chess program for the Amiga and PC compatibles with the addition of one notable feature . . . live action. That's right, when two pieces meet in combat, it's drawn swords and severed limbs to the fore in an orgy of animated violence.

So how do they compare? Will the flashy presentation and entertainment value of the young pretender see off the tried and trusted gameplay of the old favourite? The pieces are set up, the clocks are reset . . . let the battle begin.

ROUND ONE: PRESENTATION

It's an old war-gamers adage that the best way to compare two board games was to weigh the boxes – the heavier the box, the better the game! This simple rule applies equally to chess programs' manuals, as the amount of information contained is usually a good pointer to the depth of the program.

In this case Colossus wins hands down. Despite the fact that the two manuals are roughly the same size, the Battle Chess book is entirely taken up by a beginner's guide to Chess and a list of historic games. Colossus' manual on the other hand has 34 pages dedicated to an in-depth listing and explanation of the program's features.

On-screen, the presentation is very similar across both programs, with each accessing features via a series of pull-down menus. The Battle Chess system comes out slightly in front this time as its animated menus are entirely self-explanatory, whereas Colossus' more complex instructions often require a reference to the manual.

ROUND TWO: GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Although these features would usually be considered cosmetic in a chess program, in this case we're dealing with one program whose main selling point is its animated gameplay.

Battle Chess is graphically stunning, with a 3D board and characters that would have most players drooling out of their mouths. The characters are nice when motionless, but when they begin to move things really get going. Pawns march in typically military fashion, Knights strut in a manner befitting their rank, Bishops glide solemnly and reverently while the Queen vampishly wiggles her curvaceous hips enticingly as she patrols the board.

However it's only when two pieces meet in combat that sparks begin to fly. Knights dismember each other, Bishops get vicious and the Queen lets rip with a little black magic. This element is so engrossing that I found myself sacrificing Pawns unnecessarily just to see another fight.

Colossus may not have any of this excitement built in, but its graphics are nevertheless superb. There's a choice of four piece sets (ranging from Traditional through Oriental to Space Age), so everyone should find a favourite. The board and pieces are sharp and distinct, and a unique 'rotate and tile' feature allows the player to view the proceedings from any angle.



▲ *Battle Chess title screen.*

ROUND THREE: THE GAME

By far the best way to compare two chess games is to play them

again each other, so this is exactly what I did. Colossus played White and took an early advantage, but Battle Chess fought well from behind and at one stage looked as though it could actually cause an upset. A couple of surprising sacrifices and a devastating end game however, and Colossus trapped the Black King behind its own Pawns to take the honours.

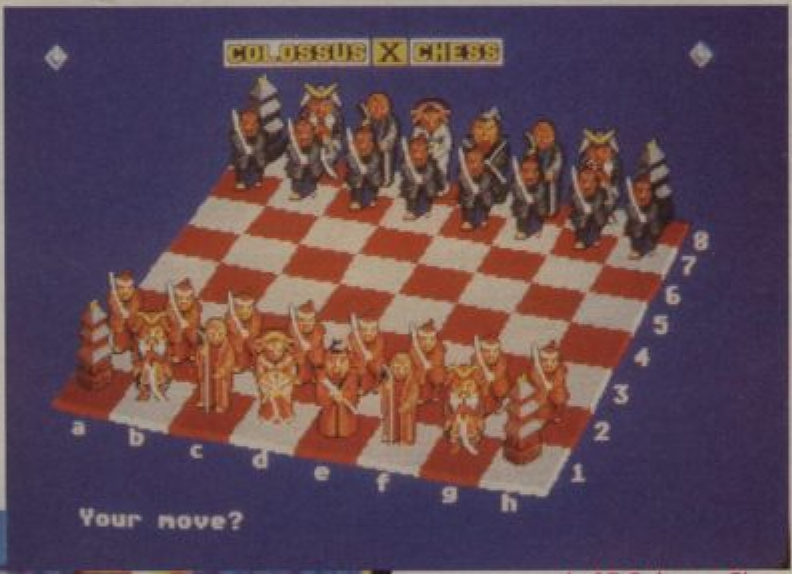
Both machines were allowed up to one minute to consider each move, and more often than not the entire time allocation was utilised. Battle Chess appeared to play a strong attacking game, attempting to win by gaining the upper hand through a series of piece-swapping moves. Colossus on the other hand played a more devious game, executing a few moves that had me scratching my head and obviously having the same effect on Battle Chess.

What makes Colossus unique among chess programs is its ability to include its opponents moves in its 'book', and recall them for use in later games. This means that in theory its game should constantly improve in parallel with the player's and therefore provide a constant challenge.

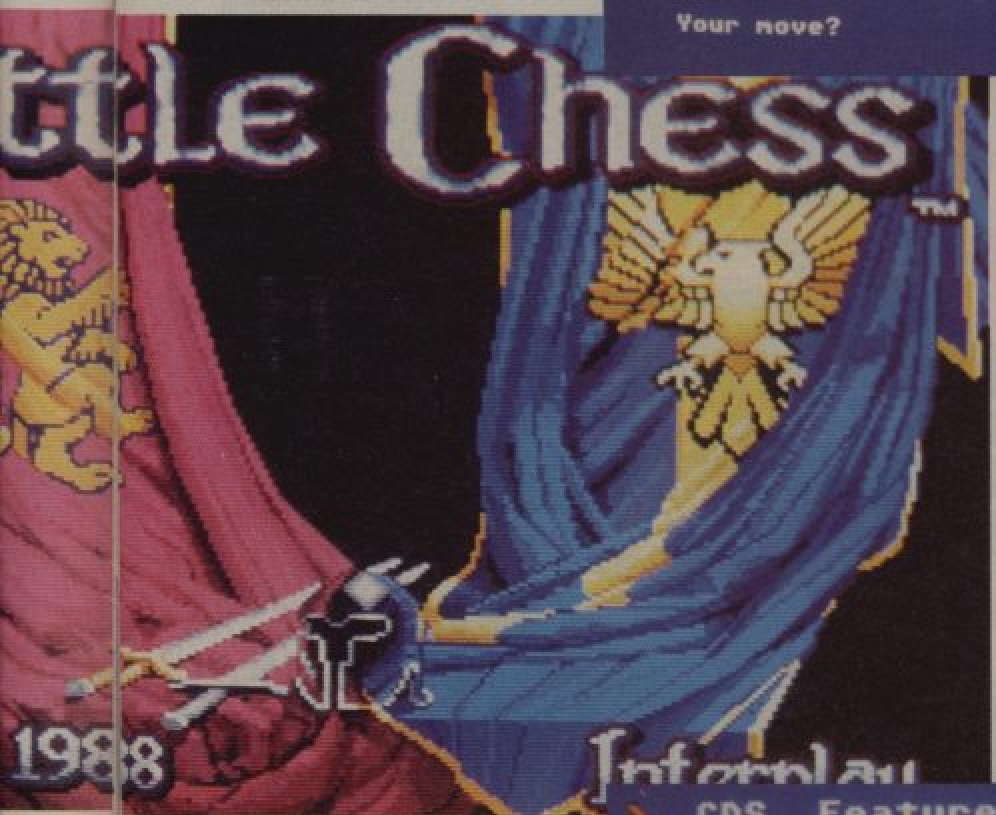
THE VERDICT

To be fair it must be said that both titles are very strong. Both would provide a challenge to an average chess player, and neither has any glaring bugs or defects. Battle Chess however is a game built around a gimmick, and like all gimmicks its novelty does eventually wear off. After a while I found that I was spending more time studing the 2D board (which incidentally is better than its Colossus counterpart) and only referring to the 3D display to watch a fight sequence.

Despite its traditional exterior, Colossus Chess X proved to be a better all-round program. The sharper display and the 'learn as it plays' feature made it the more user-friendly of the two and has been the most played chess program in my flat of late. One things for certain, 16-bit chess players no longer have any cause for complaint with software of this standard available.



▲ *ST Colossus Chess.*



UPDATE . . .

The PC version of Battle Chess and the Amiga version of Colossus are currently under development and should be available early in 1989. There are no plans for an ST Battle Chess, but a PC version of Colossus is planned for late next year. The price for this version is as yet undecided.

COMPARITIVE COMPETITON

You've read the piece, now play the game. Thanks to a unique C+VG tie-up, we're delighted to be able to offer you a chance to win a fabulous hand-painted chess set, courtesy of CDS Software – and there are also 10 copies of Electronic Arts' Battle chess up for grabs for the runners-up!

Normally available from Harrods at a cost of over £200, this beautiful chess set comes complete with wooden board and metal pieces in one of two configurations: American Civil War or Alice In Wonderland.

All you have to do to win this wonderful collector's item is to study the picture above and decide how White can execute a checkmate in two moves. Jot the answer down in normal chess notation and send it to: Check This Mate! C&VG, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. The clock is running, so make sure that your entry is in before January 10th.

	BC	CCX
► GRAPHICS	91%	88%
► SOUND	82%	77%
► PLAYABILITY	78%	84%
► VALUE	80%	80%
► **OVERALL**	**84%**	**91%**

▼ *An interesting viewpoint.*

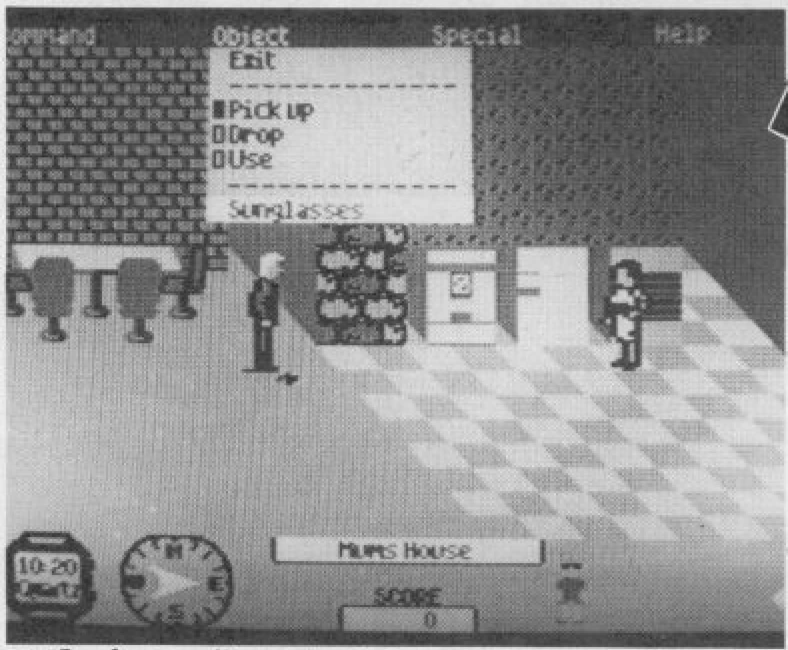




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► MACHINES: C64, SPEC, AMS.
► SUPPLIER: GREMLIN.
► PRICE:
► VERSIONS TESTED: C64, SPEC.
► REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.

(To be read in the style of Norman Lovett). Oh dear. Boo hoo. 80% of the Melchester Rovers five-a-side team has been kidnapped. That's four of the five players, if you hadn't already guessed. Nobby, Spunky, Tossy and Veiny have all been abducted by some evil criminal mind, and it's all down to one man to save them – Roy of the Rovers. Yeah!



▲ *Roy features this arcade adventure scene.*

ROY OF THE ROVERS

Instead of going for the usual boring approach of trying to come up with a single decent game, Gremlin have quite originally gone for the rather odd approach of putting two very poor games togehter. Does it work well? Does it heck.

The first of the two games is imaginatively entitled *Roy: The Adventure*. This is the full-blown exciting escapade as you guide Roy around the streets of Melchester, talking, smiling and fighting with the people he meets. The game is viewed as a side-on scroller, with roads cutting through the plane of vision, both into and out of the plane of the screen. These streets can be moved onto by moving Roy in the general direction of the intersection and pushing up or down to move into or out of the screen.

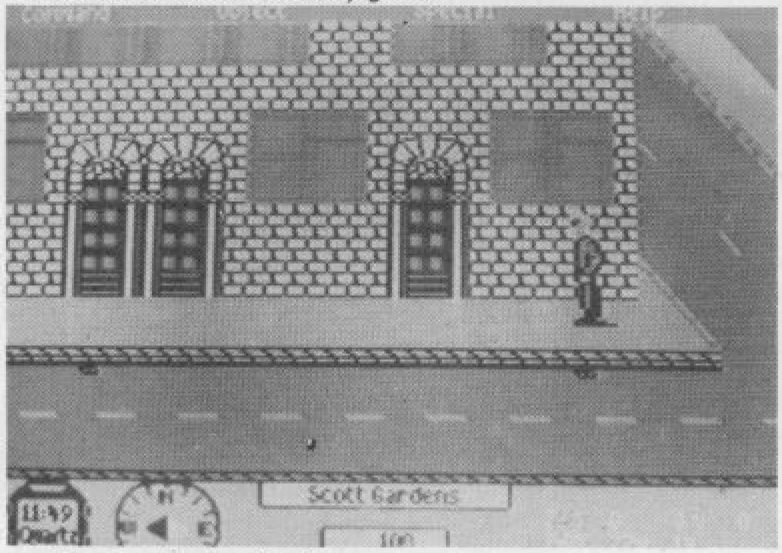
A menu system is used to run the game in a method not unlike the GEM system used on the ST. A menu bar at the top of the screen has four choices, each of which can be selected via a certain key on the keyboard. Each bar brings up a different window, which does different things. Select the Extras option, and you can stop and chat or fight with anyone who may be standing near you, or simply smile at them, shown by a large, Colgatey gleam around the general vicinity or Roy's mouth.

Graphics aren't too bad for this section. The C64's graphics are far superior to the Spectrum's due to the good use of colour and reasonable sprite definition. The sound is limited to some spot effects and tunette here and there.

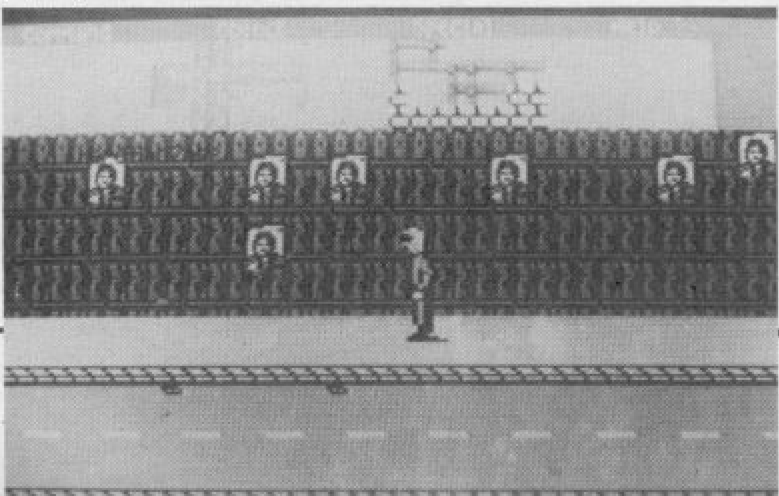
The second section is an appalling five-a-side football game which is just so bad, I couldn't play it for anymore than a few minutes. Correction. I couldn't play it for anymore than a few minutes. Correction. I couldn't play it. The graphics are pathetic, the gameplay is slow and frustratingly unresponsive. The controls are slack and the fun level is dangerously close to nonexistant. The ball never leaves the floor – even when the goalie kicks the ball out, it merely ends up as a gentle roll along the floor.

Roy of the Rovers is a pathetic attempt at both an adventure and a football game. Stick to *Microsoccer* or *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* if you're after something a little more footbally. As for representing the feel of the comic successfully, well, at least my finger won't go through the tape.

▼ *Not one of the all time footy greats.*



▼ *Roy is on the transfer list.*



	C64	SPEC
► GRAPHICS	6	5
► SOUND	5	3
► PLAYABILITY	3	3
► VALUE	2	2
► **OVERALL**	**48%**	**41%**

UPDATE . . .

C64 and Spectrum versions are on sale now. An Amstrad version will shortly be available but there are no plans for an Atari ST or Amiga interpretation of the popular comic soccer hero. Shame.



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Reviews



Who, what, where? ▲

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► **PRICES: SPEC/AMS CPC £14.95; CASS £19.95 DISK, C64 £14.95, CASS £19.95 DISK, ST £19.95, AMIGA £19.95, AMSTRAD PCW £19.95.**
► **SUPPLIER: DOMARK.**
► **VERSION TESTED: AMIGA/SPECTRUM.**
► **REVIEWER: CIARAN BRENNAN.**

TRIVIAL PURSUIT II

Last year was a good time for re-hashes and re-runs. Lost In Space made it onto the nation's TV screens, and in the pop world, Kylie Minogue squeezed a little more life out of The Locomotion while The Christians did a similar job on Harvest For The World . . . in fact the list is almost endless.

The company which by far takes the biscuit in the re-release stakes is Domark, who followed up a new stab at Star Wars with a second attempt at a Spitting Image licence (anyone remember Splitting Images?). Domark is obviously doing well with this policy, so here we have the next 'F Reg' revival of one of its classic games Trivial Pursuit.

To be fair, this is an imaginative and entertaining attempt at modernising the Trivial Pursuit concept. A space exploration scenario has been added and a great deal of the company's sense of humour has been incorporated.

The story involves a dying earth and the quest for new life on far-off Genus II. The object is to journey through space collecting bric-a-brac that will help you out in your new life.

To get started, each player is asked a question – answer correctly and it's off to the rocket to begin your exploration.

Each galaxy contains an item that's necessary for your quest – you may not think that a tennis racquet or a microscope are essential items, but you'd better not ignore them if you want to survive.

Anyway, back to the game. Explore each planet in the galaxy by landing on it and answering the question that's put to you by the native lifeform's equivalent of 'Bob' Holness. Answer the question correctly and one of two things will happen: if you've picked correctly, you'll be awarded a piece of rubbish, if not the planet will disappear from view and it'll be off to search the next one in line.

When all six pieces have been collected, you get a chance to fly to Genus II to test your general knowledge against that planet's elders.

Well that's the theory, but what is the practice like? Actually it's not quite as good as it could have been. For a start there are far too few questions in the game's repertoire . . . even with the extra question pack. When questions begin to repeat themselves on the second play, you know that you're in for a rough ride.

Probably the worst fault though is that you've seen it all before – it's absolutely no advance on the original computer version. If you really want to know what country has the nearest territory to Japan then by all means give it a try, but don't expect too much.

How, which, why? ▼



AMIGA

► GRAPHICS	53%
► SOUND	46%
► VALUE	51%
► PLAYABILITY	74%
► **OVERALL**	**65%**

SPECTRUM

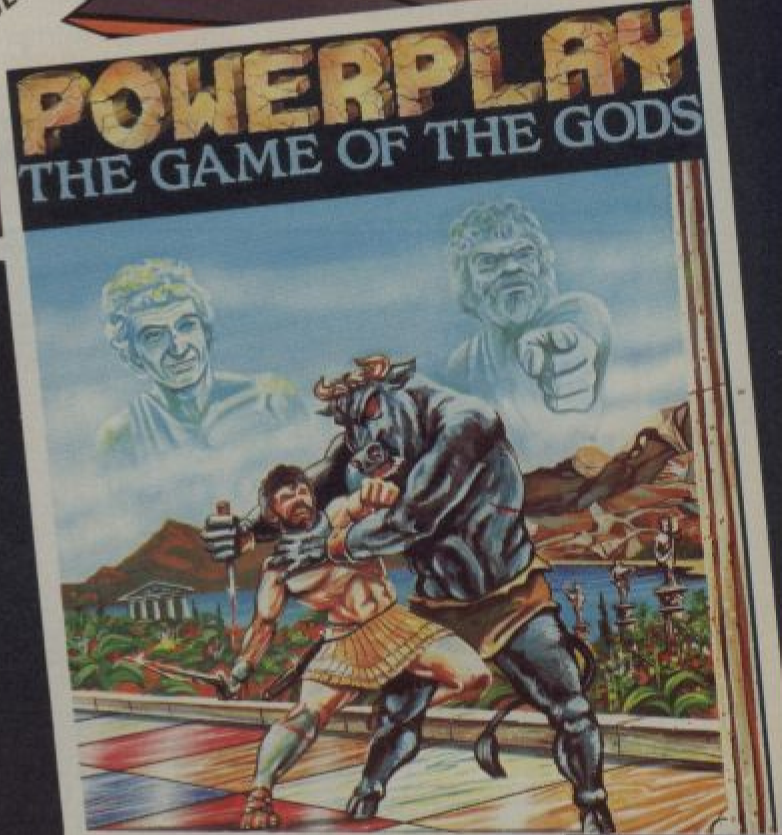
► GRAPHICS	67%
► SOUND	64%
► VALUE	63%
► PLAYABILITY	74%
► **OVERALL**	**44%**

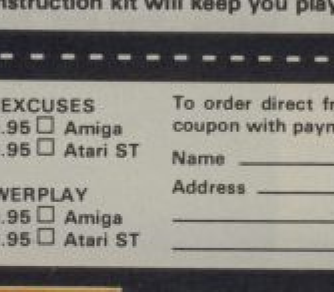
UPDATE . . .

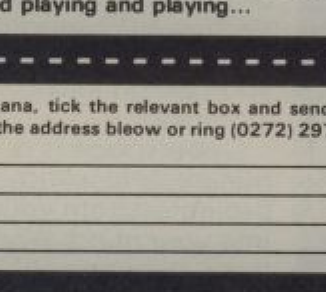
All versions should be finished as you read this, with each harbouring exactly the same level of playability. The differences will be just as you would expect them to be from machine to machine – i.e. the Amstrad will be nice and colourful while the C64 will incorporate nicer sound effects.

NO EXCUSES









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A stunningly original quiz game for one to four players.

Amiga Screen

Reviews

NEURO

C+VG HIT!

► MACHINES: C64.
► SUPPLIER: ELECTRONIC ARTS.
► PRICE: £16.95.
► VERSION TESTED: C64.
► REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.

Neuromancer is the second release from the new independent software house, Interplay, following on from *Battle Chess*.

The normal way to open a review is to tell you which pigeonhole the game falls into. *Neuromancer* doesn't fall into any, much in the same way that *Times Of Lore* doesn't.

In *Neuromancer*, which incidentally, is a cyberpunk adventure, you are a novice cyberspace cowboy, with nothing but a VXB deck and a copy of Comlink 1.0. Before I start confusing you all with credit chips, chip implants, Rom constructs and weird computerised journeys through the mind, I'd better explain how it all works.

You are given the task of discovering what is happening to all the Cyberspace Cowboys that are all being killed or just vanishing. This is done quite easily with just a bit of detective work. A small part of the work involves physically travelling around the streets and talking to people, talking your way into and out of restricted areas, occasionally getting arrested and trundling into areas where you're not supposed to go. This is only a very small part of it.

A lot of the work boils down to talking to people that you never meet, over modem links. The whole game revolves having expensive, more capable machinery (decks, as they're known) and having advanced software. The most important things to get are these: a cyberspace compatible deck and Comlink 6.0 or later.

First thing is the deck – how do you get one? Well, to start with you have six dollars on your credit chip (a form of credit card, except that you actually carry the currency on it.) You can download money onto your chip by using the PAX terminals dotted around (more later) as you begin with $2000 in the bank. There are two important things to remember here.

One: you can always get arrested for the most unlikely thing, like cheeking a cop, so always leave money in the bank so that the regular $500 can be removed in the form of a fine. Two: before you start, you have to pay the barman at the bar where you've been sleeping in the dish of the day, synthi-spaghetti. Three cyberspace compatible decks cost in the region of $20,000 upwards – you don't have access to that kind of money to start with, so you have to (a) get a translation of as many things for free as possible and (b) get as much money as possible. You can get money by selling bits of your body, but you only get cheap plastic replacements that wear out quickly. Is it worth it?

The other thing I mentioned was the Comlink 6.0. Comlink is an item of softwarez (yes that is how you spell it) and you can't run your deck without softwarez. You begin with a very low standard deck and Comlink 1.0. Version 1.0 can only connect to the most simple and basic of systems, so an upgrade is definitely worth sniffing out. Version 6.0 is ideally what you want, because then you can go into cyberspace.

Cyberspace is a non-existent world projected from your deck into your mind. What it is is three dimensional information, and it's in this state that you transcend from basic modem hacking into a real and frightening world. All the various computer systems, from now on known as bases, are represented as mathematical shapes, and it's these you have to try and get into. Some are protected, and some are heavily protected. By what?

By ICE intruder countermeasure electronics. What do you



▲ Sell your body.

▼ Neuromancer – a nightmare future.





▲ Future fun and frolics.

MANCER

use to get past the ICE? The same thing the whales did. You use an ICE-breaker. An Icebreaker is another type of softwarez, and there are lots of different types.

Now the technical aspects. The PAX system is a system not unlike teletext. It provides free access to a banking system, a daily newspaper and a bulleting board, with which you can pick up some pretty hot hints and job offers. As well as the odd snatch of humour.

One thing that made me chuckle was an advert from Interplay for *Bard's Tale 714* and *Wasteland 4*. You can leave messages as well, and there's quite a snazzy little earner that makes you $10,000 without doing anything if you go the right way about it, but I'm not telling you where.

The modem system consists of finding a jacking-in plug and connecting the appropriate software. Then you have to enter a connection code to link up to a base. If you have a high enough level of software, you link up and have to enter a password. The right passwords can get you through to higher levels of access, giving you a greater amount of things to do. For example, on level one access at the Cheapo Hotel, you can review or pay your bill. On level two, you can review, pay or alter your bill. Handy if you haven't got any money and need some caviar. All this jacking on costs money, in much the same way as a modem, so you have to keep an eye on your money. The really high access calls to the really distant companies don't half make your money drop.

There are other subtleties to the game, as well. Things like skill chips, which can be directly implanted onto your brain and give you skills you never thought you could get, like cryptology and hardware repair – even Coptalk, which gives you the skill of being able to talk like a cop.

In between all this jacking on and talking to others, you have a lot of walking about to do. This is all viewed side on, with your man roaming around in a full 3D environment. At the bottom of the screen is a block of eight icons. These control things like your inventory, the manipulation of items and the disk access. It also contains the conversation icon, which, when clicked on, gives you a list of possible and suitable phrases you can say to present company either to start or continue a conversation. One of my favourites is 'Finn. Did you know that your head looks like it was designed in a wind-tunnel?'.

The graphics are pretty good, and the animation of the main character as he walks from left to right and vice versa is great – just see the way he struts.

Sound is great; lots of little spot effects and a fairly decent tune take all the auditory section of the main game, but the loading music is fab. All digitised, it features a track by none other than Devo.

I'm not going to say that Neuromancer is the best game I've ever played – it's just very, very good. It takes a little while to fully understand exactly what's going on and what exactly you're doing, but it's worth it in the end. Another goodie from Interplay.





▲ *Hamsterhead?*



▲ *Hunting down a deck.*



C+VG HIT!

C64	
► GRAPHICS	73%
► SOUND	87%
► PLAYABILITY	96%
► LASTABILITY	93%
► **OVERALL**	**90%**

UPDATE . . .

There are plans to convert Neuromancer to all formats – ST, Amiga, PC, Spectrum and Amstrad – but when they'll actually appear is another matter entirely.

There's certainly plenty of potential to produce some incredible 16-bit visions – let's hope EA don't take too long!

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Screen shots from various formats.





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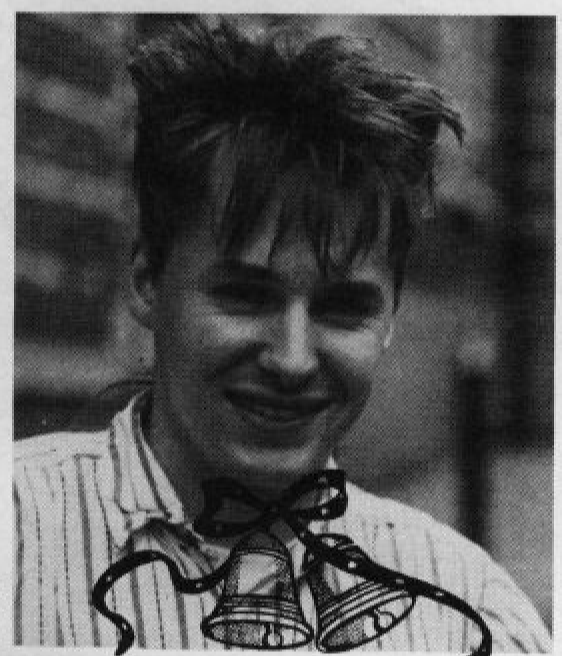

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PlayMasters

Merry Christmas folks! Welcome to this small, but festive tips section. As per usual there's a pile of POKEs, tips, cheats and hints – plenty to keep you occupied over the Christmas hols. Speaking of which, why not use your spare time to knock up some tips on the games you get for Christmas. There's a big bundle on software for the sender of the month's best tips – Kingsley Hyam was the winner this month. Send in your stuff to Playmasters, C + VG, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. See you anon.



OH NO (Firebird)
David Pocock was recently chatting to the Sensible Software team, and they revealed that if you press both shift keys when the title screen changes to the highscore table, you'll start a new game at the level where you died on the previous game.

NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR (Firebird)
Purchasers of this crappy C64 budget game might be able to squeeze a few more minutes play with this tip from Scott Mayers of Lowestoft, Suffolk. Just go to the rop right of the screen and keep on jumping and you'll go through all 16 levels with ease.

PSYCHO PIGS UXB (US Gold)
Spectrum owners might find this tip from James Donlon of London amusing. Load the game – don't put in an interface – and select Kempston Joystick on the title screen. Watch what happens . . .

VINDICATOR (Imagine)
Stuck for codes? Fear not, for Mark Corrin is here with the Spectrum ones. Whether or not they work on other versions is a mystery – you'll have to try them out for yourselves . . .

LEVEL TWO: VALSALVA MANOEUVRE
LEVEL THREE: EUSTACHIAN TUBES

C64 RESET POKES
All these lovely reset POKEs come from Andy and Gary Brown of Blackpool, Lancs. To enter them, simply load the game, reset the computer, enter the POKE, press the RETURN key and then type in the SYS number and press return again for infinite lives. It's so-o-easy!

VIRUS (Firebird).
Start a game and hold down enter (on the keypad), and while keeping it depressed press P and then O. When you thrust a third bar appears. Now, when you press L you get an extra missile, D turns the demo on or off, F restores all the fuel, B disables the graphics, N turns the cheat off and C disables the graphics update making a horrid sicky mess at the bottom of the screen. Cheers to Kingsley Hyams for that fun-packed goodie bag.



▲ *The Vindicator codes are revealed.*

MENACE (Psyclapse)
At any time type
XR3ITURBONUTTERBAST-ARD
to gain a compliment of weapons, and you can go to any level by pressing the relevant key on the keypad. A certain Mr Hyams of Benfleet, Essex, discovered that.

MARBLE MADNESS (Electronic Arts)
On the Amiga version of this reasonable conversion leave the marble stationary at the beginning of level one for a surprise.

TO HELL AND BACK
POKE 32371, 173, SYS 30464

SCOOBY DOO
POKE 7450, 96 SYS 2560

CHUBBY GRISTLE
POKE 3613, 173 SYS 2994

GAUNTLET (Kixx)
POKE 49004, 96 SYS 32768

HOPPIN' MAD
POKE 24447, 165 SYS 20480

LAST MISSION
POKE 7927, 12 SYS 14848

MEGA APOCALYPSE
POKE 32417, 173 SYS 22562

LIGHT FORCE
POKE 11547, 5 SYS 6713

LIVING DAYLIGHTS
POKE 4390, 173 SYS 4352

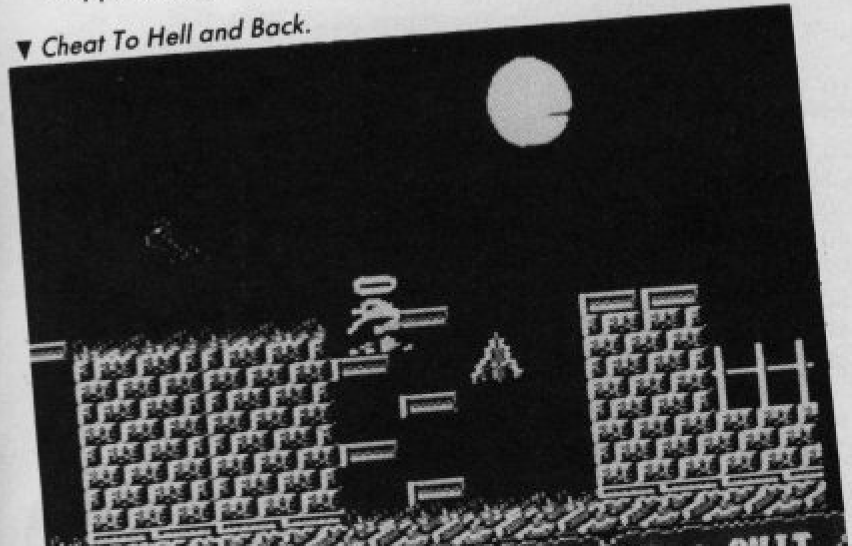
BACK TO REALITY
POKE 20109, 173 SYS 16384

STARFOX
POKE 35156, 165 SYS 32768

WEST BANK
POKE 12713, 165 SYS 4100

OUTRUN (SEGA)
B. Everett of Leicester knows how to access the sound test – just press left/right/down/up on the tune select screen. Now select tune as normal and you can pull down and press a button for the best Outrunners.

▼ *Cheat To Hell and Back.*





▼ Bionic Commando POKEs.

SPECTRUM MULTIFACE POKES
Whop in your Multiface and get POKEing for some unlimited lives. Thanks to Stephen Crawford at Co. Antrim, Ireland.

LAST NINJA II
POKE 29966, 255, POKE 40777, 0

MARAUDER
POKE 35160, 175: POKE 35161, 50:POKE 35162, 95: POKE 35163, 250

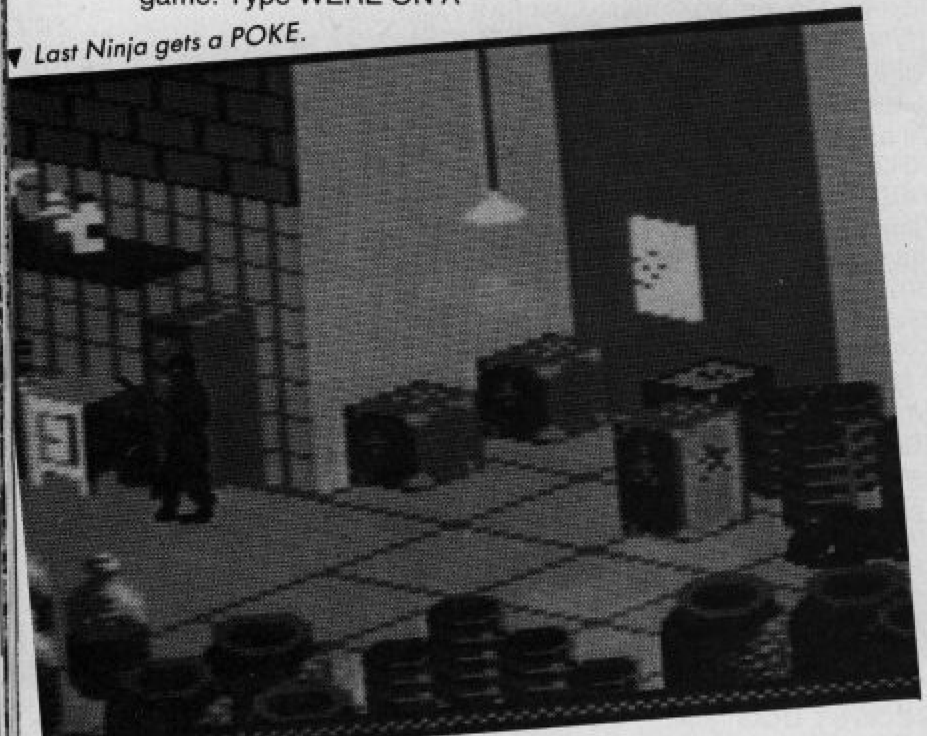
ROADBLASTERS
POKE 29261, 0:POKE 37100, 0

BUGGY BOY
POKE 37966, 24

BIONIC COMMANDO
POKE 34690,0

CYBERNOID II (Hewson)
Andrew Sutton of Darfield, S. Yorks found out that if you select the define keys option and define the keys as Y, G, R, O (in that order) you're graced with unlimited lives. Jolly good show!

STARGLIDER II (Rainbird)
Here's an absolutely brilliant tip from Gordon Keenan of Glasgow. Load the game and start. Press F for fixed sights and slow the ship to a halt. (Amiga) press the BACKSPACE key to pause the game. (Atari ST) press the DELETE key to pause the game. Type WERE ON A MISSION FROM GOD and after hitting the last D press 1 on the main keyboard. You'll know that the cheat is operational because the shield and energy levels drop to a fixed level. Press the K key to get ALL the weapons in the game (including the neutron bomb), and if you're running low of weapons, just press K to get them all back again. By the way, pressing the F2 key turns on some text – does anyone know what it means?


▼ Last Ninja gets a POKE.

SORCERY + (Virgin)
Another ST cheat, again from Kingsley Hyam. Type GAS MASK WHEELER WANTS CHEAT (include spaces) and the sorcerer becomes invincible.

SPY Vs SPY (Databyte)
Wait by the door to the airport and booby trap all doors. When the other spy has got all the stuff, he'll get killed trying to get to the exit – just go through the door which he tried to get through pick up the stuff from by searching the furniture and escape. If he does get through, just beat the daylights out of his and hotfoot it to the exit.

▼ Infinite time for Buggy Boy.


OIDS (Mirrorsoft)
Kingsley Hyams has come up with a neat listing. Just type it inusing BASIC, save it and RUN it before putting the game disk in.

```
10' OIDS CHEAT
20' BY KINGSLEY
25 DIM 2% (770):
CHEAT=VAPTYR (a% (1)
30 DEF SEG=0
40 BLOAD "a: START.
PRG", cheat
50 POKE
cheat+&h260c:h357c:POKE
cheat+h262,&h 302c
```

NEBULUS (Hewson)
According to Kingsley Hyman, if you type HELLIOAMJMP on the title screen of the ST version of this game you can use the function keys to transport the alien to different levels.

SUPER HANG-ON (Activision)
On the ST version, enter your name as 207L on the highscore table and a line of dots will appear. Wait until the next screen appears and then press CTRL, ALT, Z and T (that Z might be a 2 – Kingsley Hyam's writing was a bit dodgy here I'm afriad), wait until the next screen and let go of T (I bet you let go of it before. Tsk tsk!) Now the cheat mode activates, allowing you to change the centrifugal force of the bike, so you can whizz along without skidding!

BOMBUZAL (Imageworks)
Kingsley Hyam's got the codes: RATT, ROSS, LISA, GOLD, DAVE, OPAL, TREE.

Rubber Revelations

Our Spitting Image compo in which we asked you to caricature a C+VG staffer drew a huge and hilarious response.

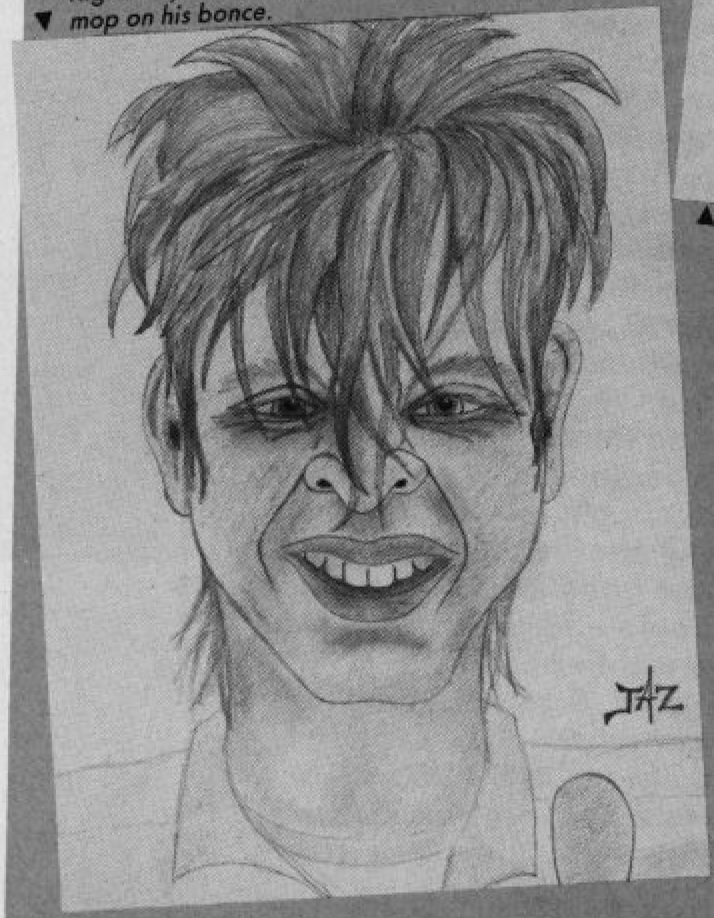
Unfortunately the representations of the Editor were so good that we cannot show them to you here on the grounds that his handsome visage would drive C+VG's female readers wild with desire. We can however show you these interpretations of Fatty Williams – and birds nest haircut Rignall.

Here are four of the best – thanks to everyone who entered. You gave us a great laugh. Outright winner is Paul Edwards of 78 Moseley Drive, Leeds – who now goes on to a challenge to win a Spitting Image puppet of his own. Runners up shown here will receive consolation Spitting Image goodies.



▲ *The winner – Fatty Williams to a T.*

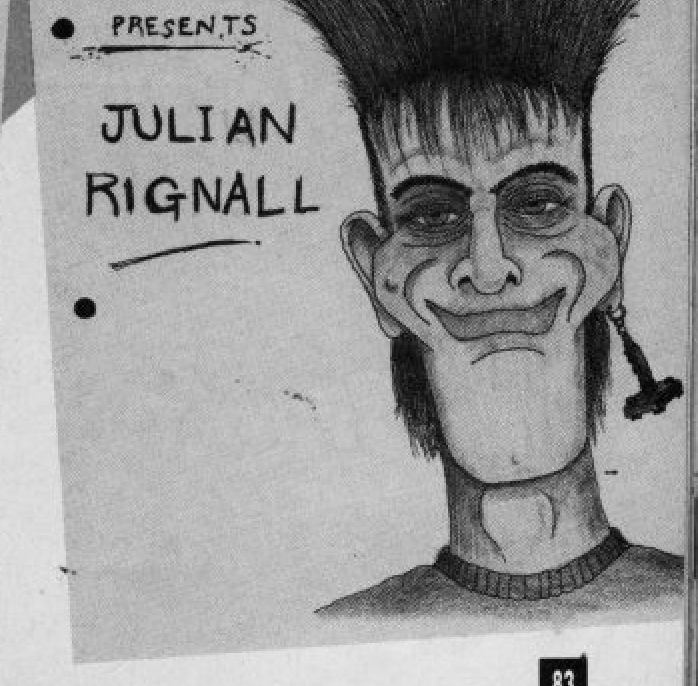
▼ *Rignall by Denise English – thumbs up for the mop on his bonce.*



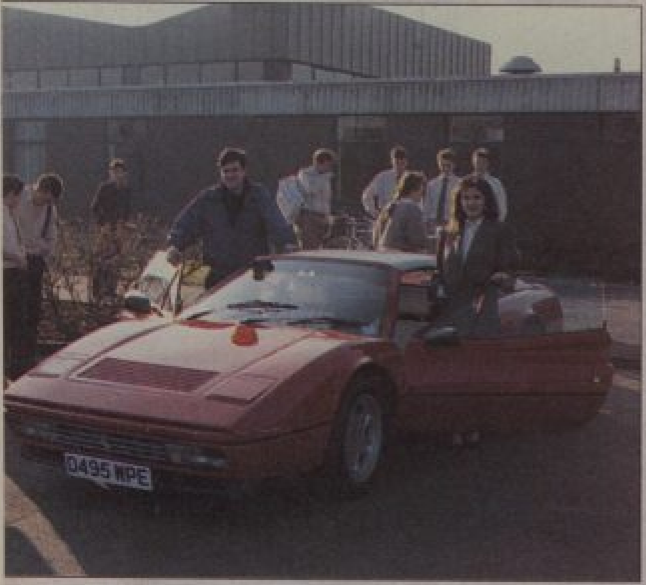
▼ *Peter Young's Fatty Williams – v. good belly the judges thought.*



▼ *Garry Jackson's Jazza – love the joystick earing.*



Compo



▲ Home James!



▲ No school dinners for Jane (yum, yum).

FERRARI

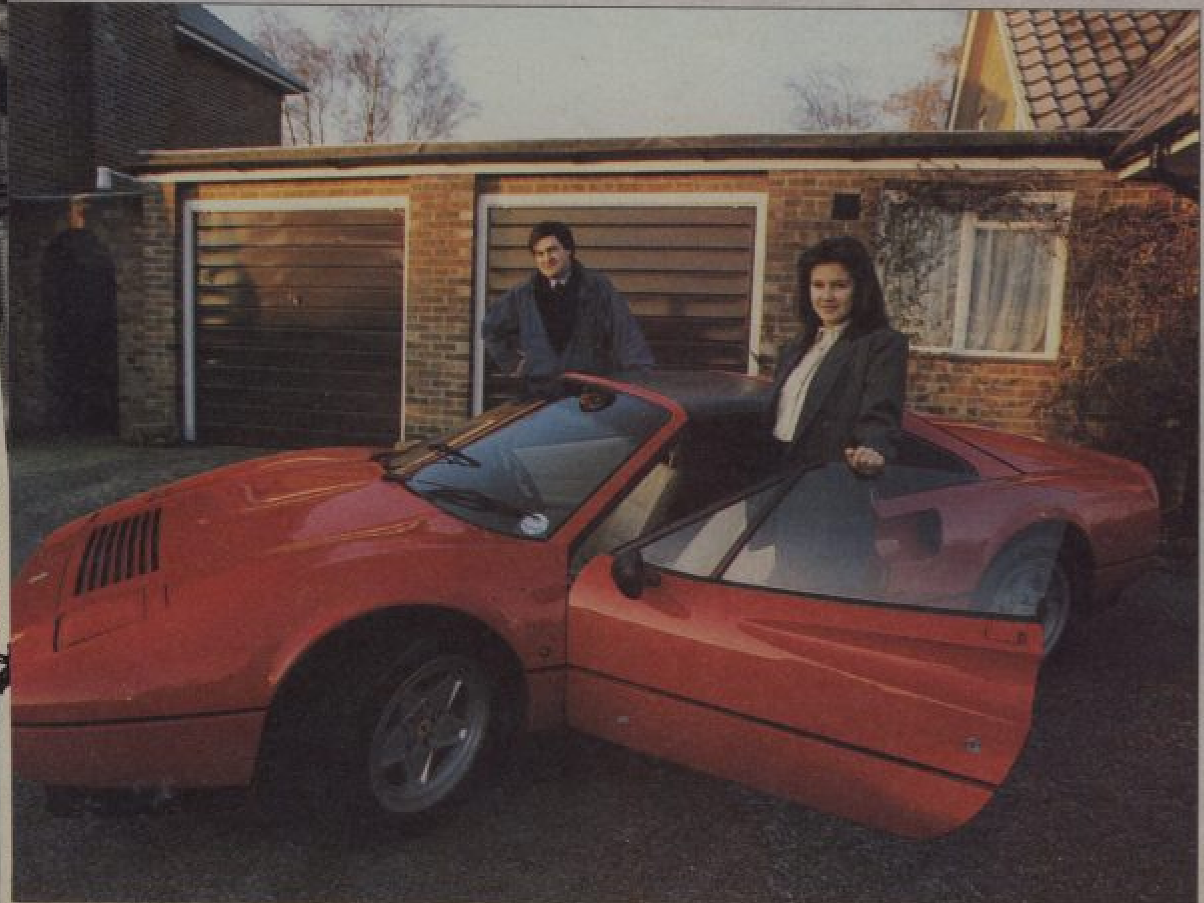
Because C + VG is the biggest and best magazine around we can offer the biggest and best prizes.

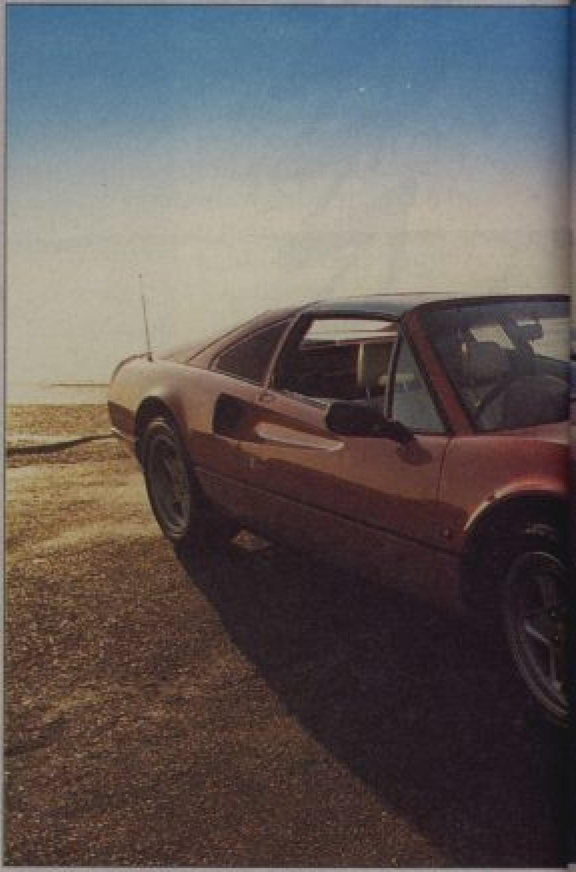
Just look at what we've given away so far this year. R-Type, Thunderblade, Out Run, and Road Blasters coin-ops. Two PC Engines, a Nintendo, hundreds of games, T-Shirts, a trip to Disneyland for two readers, and a day out in Ferrari. No other magazine has come anywhere near these prize values.

And these prizes are only the beginning. We are already planning to give away another superb holiday in the good 'ol US for two readers and we have stacks more coin-ops in the pipeline. So just remember the biggest and best prizes are always in C + VG.

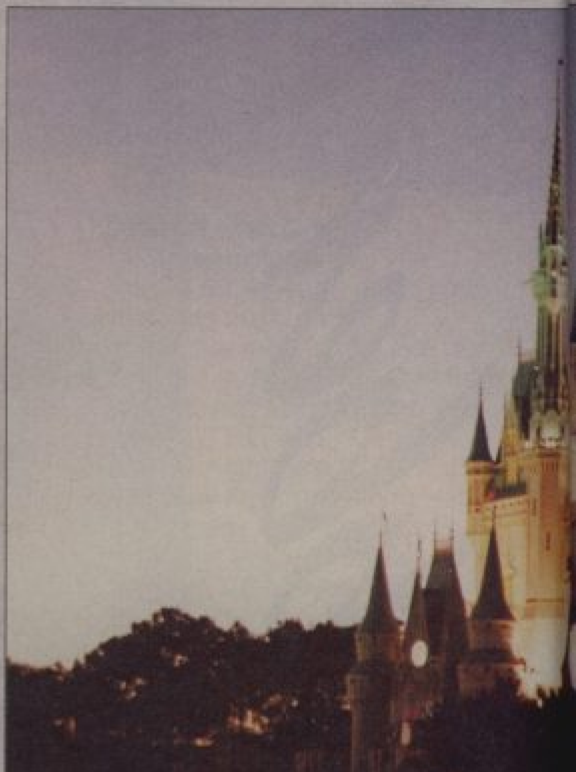
Here are some lucky prize winners enjoying their prizes.

▼ Shouldn't this be in Mean Machines?



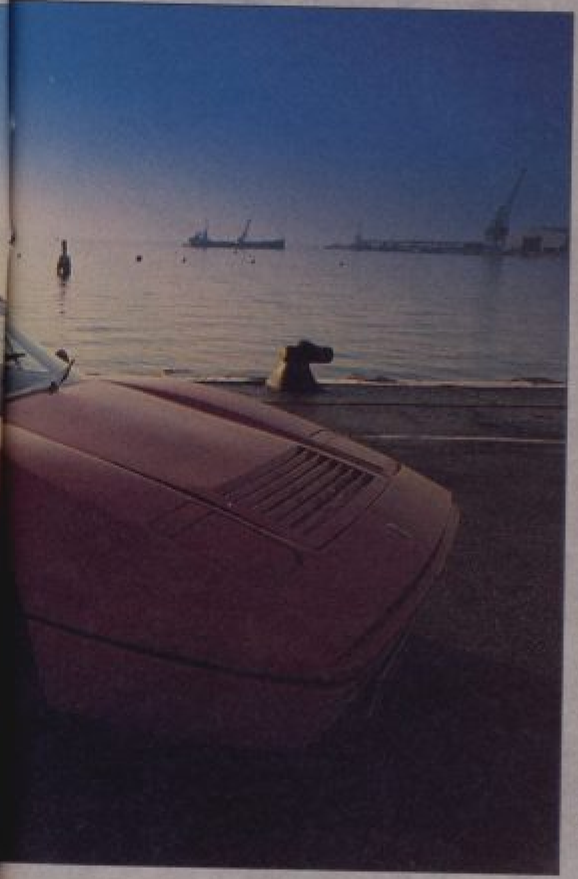


▲ "Drive me to school."



▲ Sleeping Beauty's castle at sunset.

o Results





DISNEY

Twelve year old Brendan Phoenix from Manchester scooped first prize in the C + VG/Gremlin Win A Trip to Disneyland Competition.

Brendan was accompanied by his Mum and Dad and Julian from C + VG and his fianceé, Glenys, someone had to take the piccies.

As well as all the sites of Disneyworld in Sunny Florida, Brendan also visited the Epcot Centre, and Marine World. Turly the holiday of a lifetime.

More great prizes coming up soon in your Super-Soaraway-C + VG.



▲ *Brendan, Margaret, John and Glenys.*



▲ *Tiggers are wonderful things.*

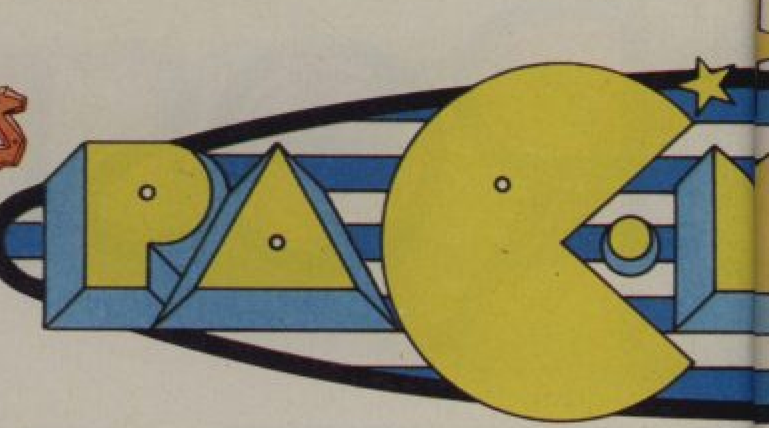
▼ *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea ride.*





THE FLINTSTONES

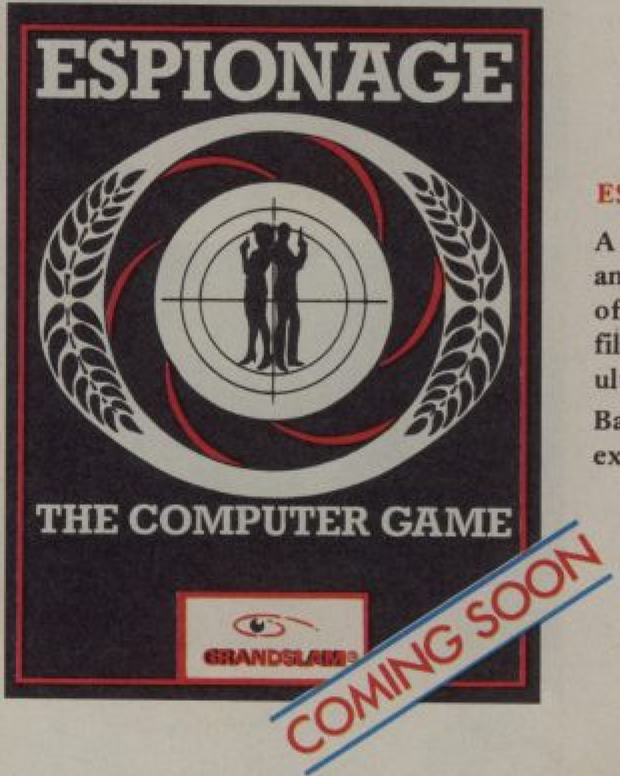
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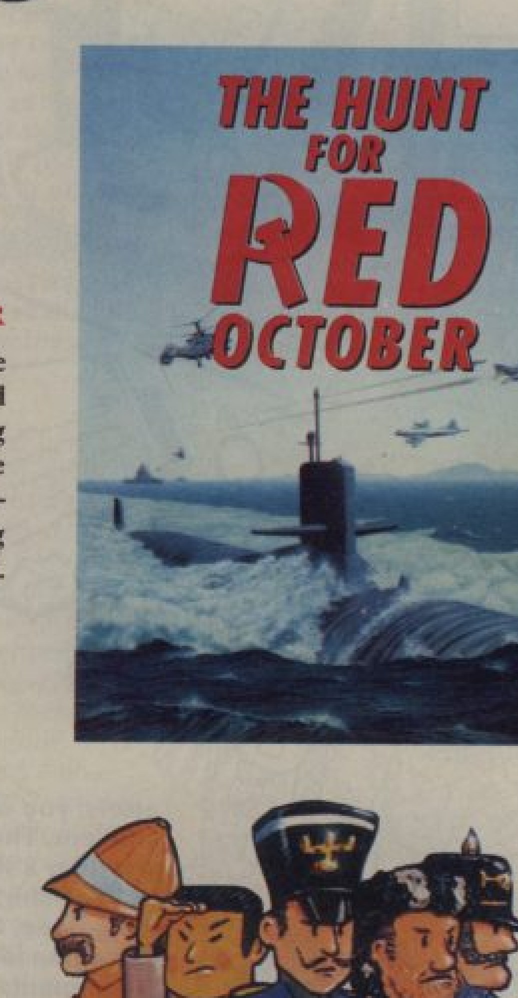




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Letters: you write 'em and we print 'em. The best one wins its sender a stonking good C+VG T-shirt. So, if you've got to gripe, feel outraged, have some ideas, complaints or comments, write in to Mailbag, C+VG, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Hi There,

● I've got that feeling. You know the one (not that Friday feeling) – just one look at you and I know it's gonna beee . . . a lovely day . . .

Yep, I've definitely got that feeling, so much so that I'm going to let you know my feelings on the different sections in the mag.

Fax is perfect, brill, wonderful, great. Who doesn't love it? Reviews aren't the best part of the mag. It varies from month to month from good to bad. Big Screen is quite good, but not everyone is into films to such a high degree, and I have often bought the mag without reading this part. AGM is good, but is still a minority subject. Playmasters is very good – one of the best parts of the mag, and is in the interest of everyone. Arcade Action is brilliant – everyone likes reading about the latest technology in games – keep up the good work. Mean Machines is good, but unreliable – it could do with some sorting out. Mailbag – what can I say apart from gis a T-shirt.

Overall I have to say that C+VG is still the best mag around, and looks like staying that way for some time to come.

Keith Lynch, Co. Dublin.

EDITOR'S REPLY: That's made us all feel better – and we've taken note of your criticisms. Mean Machines is at this present time being sorted out by Jaz Rignall – turn to page 132 to see what he's got, and the reviews are also going through a change. If anyone else has got some ideas – drop us a line.

Dear C+VG

Please calm down with the price rises.

Mark Higgins, Airdrie.

EDITOR'S REPLY: Whaaat? We're still one of the cheapest magazines around!

Dear C+VG,

● I'm the proud owner of a Sega. If you ask me they're the best. My friend has got a Nintendo and he says they are ace – I think they're ****. I like Mean Machines, but can



you make the section bigger – and why are there no Updates?

James Dodd,
Grimsby, S. Humberside.

EDITOR'S REPLY: There aren't any updates in the Mean Machines section because the game is never released on other formats. What a nit!

Dear C+VG,

● Now and then I used to pick up a copy of C+VG, but now I buy it every month. What I want to know is, what is a PC Engine. I have the impression that it's like a Sega system. Please could you give me some details.

James Dobson,
Highbridge, Somerset.

EDITOR'S REPLY: The PC Engine is a fantastic games console made by NEC. It's by far the best machine around – although at the moment it's only available in Japan. Some of the games available for it are R-Type, Space Harrier, Wardner, Street Fighter and Dragon Spirit – and they're all arcade perfect. Keep an eye on the Mean Machines column if you're interested.

Dear C+VG,

● Last month I bought ZZAP! and to my horror they had the nerve to compare the Amiga to the ST. It was really unfair and biased towards the Amiga, and they didn't point out any of the ST's good points.

I hope that you won't do anything like this, because I regard you as a neutral magazine and think that you always give fair comment.

Thomas Scully,
Dublin.

EDITOR'S REPLY: Yes, we'll always remain neutral, and only point out the best points of each machine – we think it's up to the reader to decide which machine is best suited for him or herself.

Dear C+VG,

● I think Tony Dillon is a wally – he goes over the top about everything. Why can't he just calm down like a normal person instead of raving over everything, or slagging it off.

Mike Murray,
Berkhamstead, Herts.

EDITOR'S REPLY: Erm . . . well . . . he's not THAT bad is he?

Dear C+VG,

● Recently there's been a lot of mentions of Garry Williams the Ad Manager being fat. What is an Ad Manager and is he really that fat. By the way, the mag's fab.

Peter Eveans,
Birmingham.

EDITOR'S REPLY: An Ad Manager actually sells the adverts that appear in the magazine. It's not a very demanding job, and that's why Garry is so huge – because he sits around the office all day stuffing his face with food. If anyone has any fat jokes, send them in to Mailbag – the best one printed wins a T-shirt and a bundle of software. Mark your entries "I've got a joke for Garry".

Dear C+VG,

● I'm the owner of an Amstrad CPC and think that you're not giving enough info on the Amstrad.

I'm speaking for all Amstrad owners when I say it's bloody awful – how about a demo tape for the CPC, or when you show a game how about giving us some Amstrad graphics.

Marcus Healy,
London.

EDITOR'S REPLY: We didn't have an Amstrad demo because Activision had no plans to release it on the Amstrad when we organised it. As I've already said, we review games as and when they come in – if the Amstrad version is in first, it'll get reviewed. If not, another version takes the priority. Anyway, the update at the end of a reviews always tells you exactly what's going on with other versions.

Dear C+VG,

● I'm writing to you about the Heroes of the Lance game which you reviewed in the October edition of C+VG.

I believe that I've discovered a mistake in the software which has actually been printed in your magazine. On page 27 of the mag is shown a screen picture depicting Riverwind with a short piece of text describing him. A short excerpt from the text reads "he had the temerity to fall in love with Riverwind". Having read the Dragonlance Chronicles, upon which the adventure is based, I believe that Riverwind didn't fall in love with himself, but instead fell in love with Goldmoon, whose description and picture is given on page 26.

Andrew Lawrence,
Ilminster, Somerset.

EDITOR'S REPLY: Indeed – especially when you read the text accompanying Goldmoon's picture. Well spotted that man – in fact, have a T-shirt for your pains.

Dear C+VG,

● I own a Nintendo and I think it's great. But I would like to buy some American Nintendo cartridges – Operation Wolf and Robocop in particular. Could you give me an address of a shop that stocks Operation Wolf and Robocop that would be prepared to send those games to me.

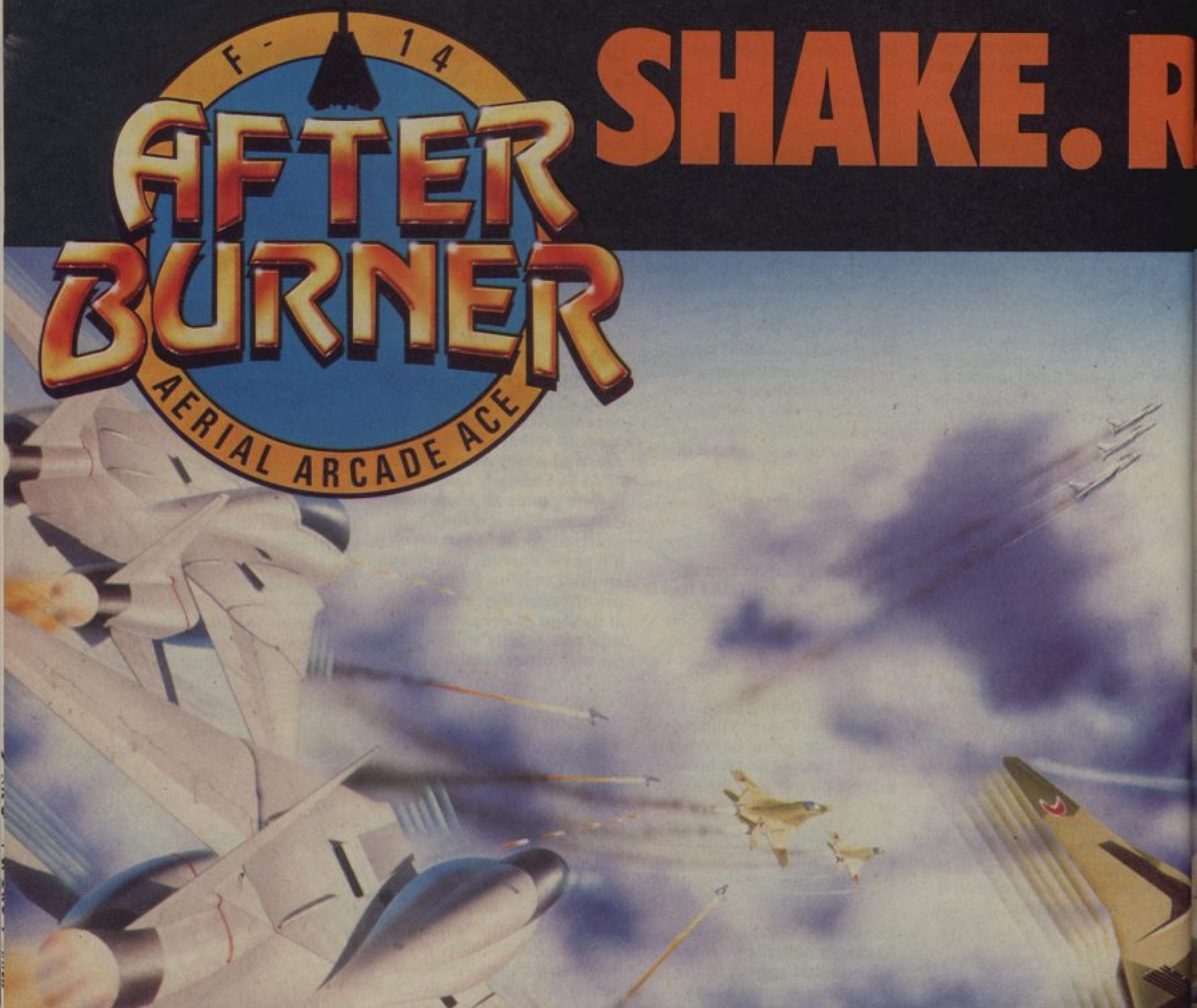
M. Longman,
Chingford, London.

EDITOR'S REPLY: I'm afraid that American (or Japanese) cartridges don't work with UK Nintendos, so don't go buying any foreign games. You can get your Nintendo converted to run American software – more details are available by sending an SAE to Telegames, Kilby Bridge, Wigston, Leicester, LE8 1TE.





SHAKE. R



RATTLE. ROLL IT. . .



Amiga screen shots shown

ST screen shots shown

CADE SENSATION OF THE YEAR'

AFTERBURNER – You've played the arcade **smash** – now **experience** the white-knuckled **realism** of a supersonic **dogfight** at home! Using your heat-seeking **missiles** and laser anti-aircraft **fire,** can you be **top gun** against a seething supersonic **swarm?**

Experience brain-numbing **G-forces;** bones **rattling** with the body-jarring **pitch** and yaw . . . **scan** with your **radar, lock on** your target and **FIRE!**

(£12.99), (£24.99)

Amstrad cassette (£9.99) and disk (£14.99), Atari ST (£24.99), and MSX (£9.99).

AGM

Welcome to our biggest AGM yet. Role playing games are booming and AGM is booming with them. In this twelve page monster we review Times of Lore, Joan of Arc, Chrono's Quest, Dark Future, plus all the latest news, adventures, helpline, and play by mail. If it its a thinking game – AGM is the place to find it.

Battletech Book Bonanza

The latest addition to the best selling Battletech line is two player combat books. Each player pilots a 200 ton walking Mech, which has immense fire power and amazing agility. They have to fight out a battle in which the player can use weapons, special attacks or, if the worst comes to the worst, fisticuffs!!

The whole game is based in the 31st century, where warfare is common and heroes are made not born. The men and women who control the Mech's are an elite band of warriors, and you as pilot have to select one of the six Mech's available for combat. The Mech's are: The Griffin, Shadow-Hawk, Wasp, Warhammer, Rifleman and Locust. All have their own advantages and dis-advantages, but as a rule of thumb you usually sacrifice speed for firepower.

An initial playtest has revealed that the books are quick to play and provide hours or realistic fun. They are very handy for short breaks, such as a tedious bus or train journey, to make the time pass quickly. The combat system is simple, but accurate and they are all extremely well drawn.

The books will shortly be released in the UK by an American company called Nova Game Designs and they sell for £2.75 each.

Slaves of Chaos is another hardback addition to the Warhammer series. It is in fact one half of two volumes that go to make up Realm Of Chaos, a complete Warhammer supplement.

When read together as a set you'll find every thing you'll need for a campaign in the Chaos Wastes of The Warhammer world. For your money, you get nearly 300 illustrated pages, army lists for immortal and mortal forces, details of Chaos mutuations, new Chaos weapons and spells, and a Chaos champion generation system. As you can see Chaos is the order of the day.

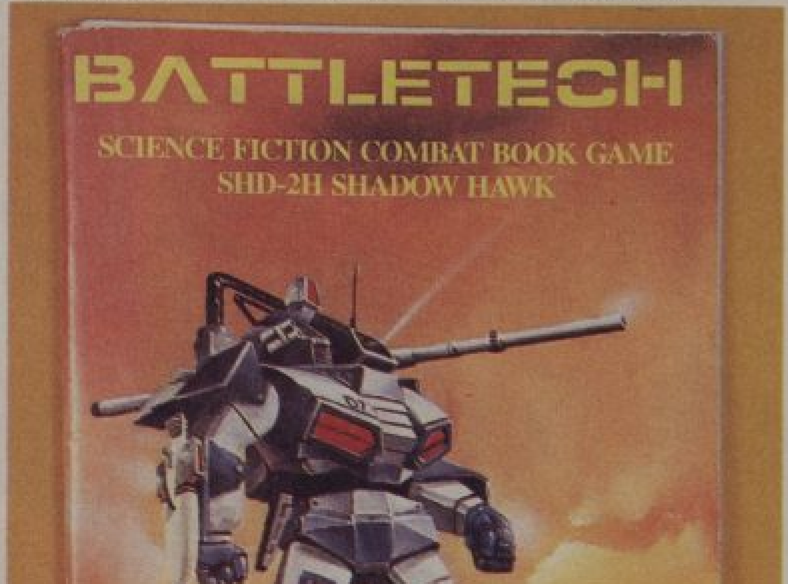
True to form the book is full of 'orrible little monsters with loads of death-chaos-spikey bits, who are ready to ruck. Needless to say the artwork is outstanding, as the book brings together the artistic talents of Tony Ackland, John Blance and Cary Chalk, who provides the colour plates.

On the front of the book is a warning, which suggests that the contests should only be scanned by "Mature readers only". Considering myself fairly mature, can report that I didn't find anything offensive and can't really see the reason for the warning. There are quite a few pictures depicting various creatures in bondage, but that's all.

"Slaves" sells for a pricey £14.99 and I can honestly say that unless you own one of the variants of Warhammer and are totally hooked on it, it is not an essential purchase.

Talking about Warhammer, the definitive guide to Warhammer Fantasy Battle is here. Called Warhammer Armies, this hardback book contains magic rules, bestiary, banner illustrations and full army lists to satisfy the needs of the most ardent Warhammer fan. This book also sells for £14.99 (seems to be the "In" price for GW nowadays) and is available now.

▼ *Battletech – more books, where's the computer game?*



▼ *Full colour artwork on selected pag*



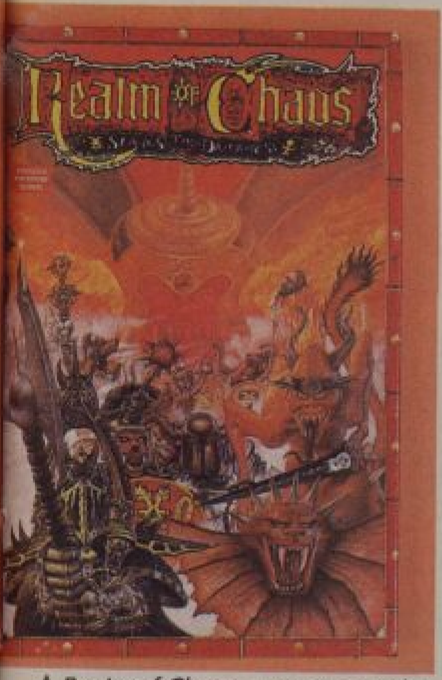


More o

● SSI are shortly to release "Demons Winter", another role playing computer game. The reason behind this is that the AD + D computer game has sold over 110,000 units alone on the C64, making it the best ever selling computer game in the USA.

The plot of the game is that Malifon, an evil god/demon was entombed in a volcano by the powers of good many years ago. Over his long period of capture Malifion has stored his power, in the form of magical energy, and has cast one devastating spell that has completely covered the planet in a deep crust of freezing snow, except the seas, which have been turned into blood.

Of course, personkind is in



▲ Realm of Chaos — recommende



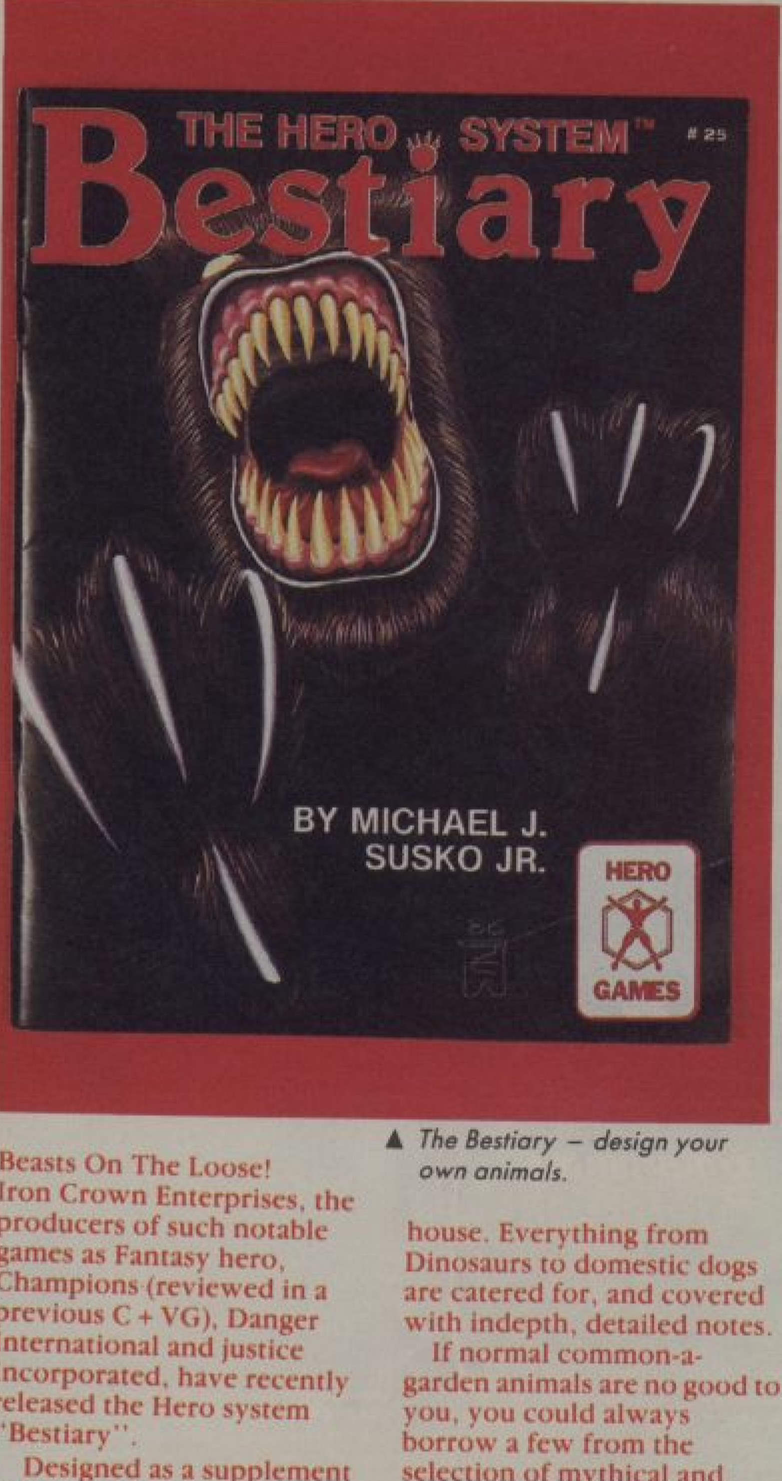
e on AD & D

a panic, making it easier for the servants of Malifon to free him. The player has to stop this by leading a party of up to five characters – which can be anything from humans to Dark Elves – each of whom have varying physical abilities that effect their skills.

There is the usual level advancement system, which means that any actions performed by the characters gain them experience points. When you have accumulated enough of these points your character goes up a level, allowing them to become better at combat, spell casting as well as making them harder to kill.

Demon's Winter is expected to sell for £20.00.

Book of Beasts



▲ The Bestiary – design your own animals.

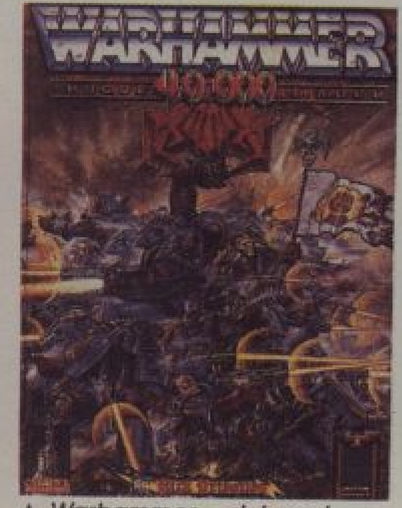
Beasts On The Loose!
Iron Crown Enterprises, the producers of such notable games as Fantasy hero, Champions (reviewed in a previous C + VG), Danger International and justice Incorporated, have recently released the Hero system "Bestiary".

Designed as a supplement for use with ANY game they produce, the "Bestiary" can easily be converted to any FRP system with ease. The 56 page booklet details anything and everything you wish to know about using animals in FRP games.

Animals are heavily underplayed in most FRP campaigns and the "Bestiary" does the best to rectify this. The animals add to the background detail of any campaign, and certain creatures can contribute a great deal if handled correctly. Animals pop up all over the place, be it in a lost valley down the Amazon or in the back yard of a Harlem house. Everything from Dinosaurs to domestic dogs are catered for, and covered with indepth, detailed notes.

If normal common-a-garden animals are no good to you, you could always borrow a few from the selection of mythical and movie monsters that are available. Still not satisfied? Then try the chapter which helps you create your own special animals, which have never been in a campaign before!!

All in all the "Bestiary" is a great read any GM worth their salt will find a use for. What's more it only costs £4.95 and I consider that a real bargain.



▲ Warhammer – delayed.

Warhammer

Warhammer fans who have been looking forward to playing the hit role playing game on their computer are in for a long wait.

After announcing to an eager PC show that they had signed the licence to Warhammer – Activision have yet to start work on the game.

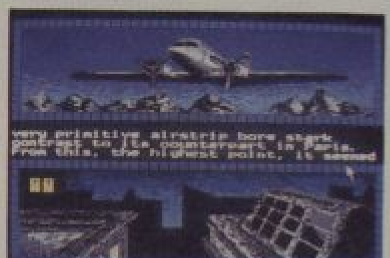
Head of development at Activision – Charles Cecil told AGM: "I value that licence very highly" but so far no development team has been assigned to the project.

Role playing games traditionally take a longer time to design and program than arcade games.

Alo-Alo

Parisienne Knights – is a sexy 30's spy yarn from Fergus McGovern's Abstract Concepts.

Featuring a unique multi-tasking adventure system – where you have two games on the go at the same time.



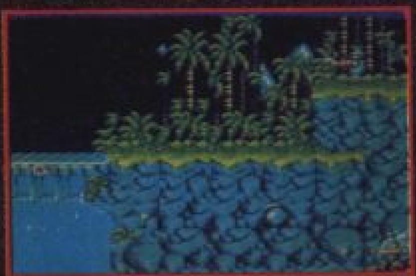
AGM

The CRUCIAL COMPILATION

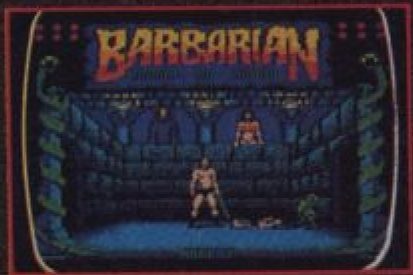


THE IN CROWD

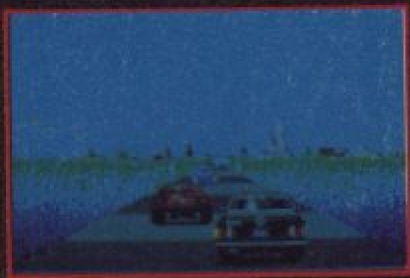
ocean



GRYZOR Featuring all the game-play of the arcade original, Gryzor takes you into a thrilling alien world of force fields, fanatical guerillas and strange enemy defence systems – but you have the fire-power and maybe, with a 'little' skill, grit and split second timing, you can infiltrate the aliens' headquarters.. Play Gryzor once and you'll be hooked!

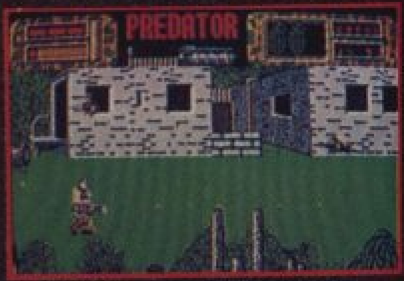


BARBARIAN THE STORY SO FAR... The evil sorcerer Drax has agreed that if a champion can be found who is able to defeat his demonic guardians, the Princess Mariana will be released. From the wastelands comes an unknown barbarian, a mighty warrior, wielding his broadsword with deadly skill. Can he vanquish the forces of Darkness? ONLY YOU CAN SAY...



CRAZY CARS You are racing in the world's craziest race: "The American Cross Country Prestige Cars Race". If you are able to complete the race before the time runs out, you will get a faster car. You start with a Mercedes 560 SEC, and only the world's best drivers may drive a Ferrari GTO.
PREPARE TO START, READY? GO!!!

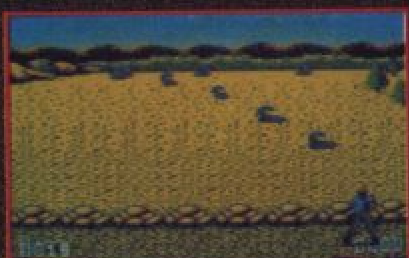
LAST NINJA replaces C.CARS on C64



PREDATOR You've heard about Predator, the Schwarzenegger movie – now you can play the leading role. Take a crack commando unit into the South American jungle to rescue a bunch of trapped diplomats. Should be easy enough...and so it would be, if it weren't for the mysterious alien who keeps on taking out your men.



KARNOV Join Karnov, the fire-breathing Russian stongman, on his hazardous quest to defeat the evil dragon Ryu and find the Lost Treasure of Babylon. Karnov is a vast 4-way scrolling game that combines both strategy and fast action in nine challenging levels of gameplay. It is recognised by arcade addicts everywhere as one of the best games of its kind. Karnov also has something special in the way of characters – have you ever been killed by a skeleton on an Ostrich?



COMBAT SCHOOL Konami's arcade hit now for your home micro and already a No. 1 hit. Seven gruelling events featuring the Assault Course, Firing Range, Arm Wrestling and Combat with the instructor himself! Combat school throws down the challenge to the toughest of thoroughbred gamesters.



TARGET RENEGADE Every move you make, every step you take, they're watching you. Fight your way through the precinct – the back alleys, the car parks, fight your way through the villainous community, the skin-heads, the Beastie Boys, the bouncers. This is just the tip of the iceberg on you chilling quest to confront "MR. BIG".



PLATOON Lead your Platoon deep into enemy territory, you can almost feel the humidity, sense the threatening dangers as you encounter the enemy and his many booby traps. Having found the underground maze of tunnels, enter at your peril! Enemy soldiers lunge at you from the murky waters within, but this is the only way you can find vital information. If you come out of this alive, you'll be just one of the few!

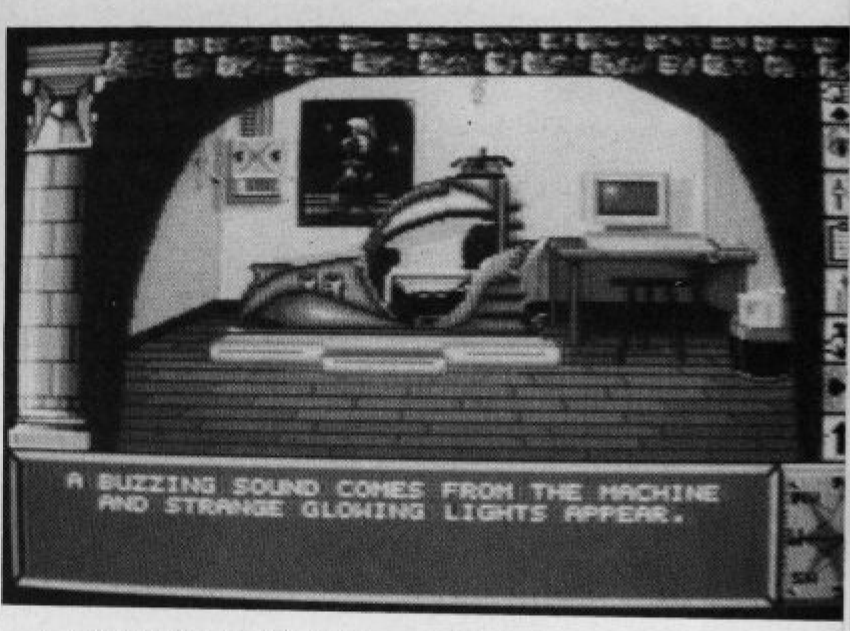
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AGM



▲ *Into the Time Machine and away you go.*

CHRONO QUEST

► ATARI ST, AMIGA, £29.95 (ATARI ST VERSION REVIEWED).
► REVIEWER: KEITH CAMPBELL.

To cut a long story short, your father, now presumed dead, invented a time machine which is hidden in the basement of his chateau. Having been mightily impressed by a journey to the future of 1987, he had planned a trip to 2125, and left the program written to take the machine there scattered around four time zones, lest they be stolen by his assumed assassin, Richard. Dad's last request is a letter imploring you to visit the time zones to find Richard, and avenge his death.

So the game starts in the chateau, and your first task is to find the programs to travel to each time zone, gather enough other useful objects, locate and reach the machine, and get it working.

Commands are issued entirely by mouse operated icons, and these differ slightly between the two versions of the game. The ST version, as well as having eight compass points plus UP and DOWN, has icons for PICK UP, PUT DOWN, SHOW INVENTORY, LIGHT ON/OFF, USE, TURN, PUSH/PULL, and SEARCH/EXAMINE, as well as utility items for saving game, setting external drives, and adjusting preference.

Below the picture at the bottom of the screen, is a window containing icons for objects in the player's inventory. Text messages to the player overlay this window, and the inventory can be restored by clicking on the SHOW INVENTORY icon. PICK UP and PUT DOWN are self explanatory – click on PICK UP, and after a WHERE prompt, a click on the appropriate object whisks it into the inventory window. All well and good, except that there are not a lot of objects to be seen – most are not actually shown in the picture. Thus, before you can exhaust the possible hiding places, as well as opening every cupboard and drawer in the building, and examining them, it is necessary to SEARCH and click on every area of every picture, to ensure, for example, that you don't miss a vital punched card which happens to lying invisibly on a carpet.

PUT DOWN has its quirks, too. Objects that 'belong' in the room take up their original position when dropped, and are shown in the picture again, if, that is, they were visible in the first place. However, 'foreign' objects simply disappear from view, and the whole picture must be searched again to discover where they fell. And that brings me to another point – a bottle of wine counts as TWO items, bottle and wine!

The system has a lot of similarities to the Mindscape system used in Shadowgate and Uninvited, but having said that, the command range is even more limited, and a lot less logical.

In Chrono Quest, the pictures are quite attractive, and in the main, full of interest. Doors and drawers visibly open, and there are a few other bits of animation, but on the whole, the animation is minimal. So are the text replies. There are plenty of text descriptions of both useful and irrelevant objects, but there is no depth to the EXAMINE command. Perhaps most irritating of all the replies, is when you try to USE something unsuccessfully, and get an inane IT'S NOT INTERESTING.

Once the time machine has been started, your travels begin. You would have thought by now that adventure writers had got the message that sudden death with no warning can kill a game stone dead. There's plenty of that here! Visit India and you will instantly be savaged by a deadly tiger if you innocently take a step in the 'wrong' direction. So it is essential to save your game position frequently if you are not going to have to retrace your steps again and again. But there is a snag here, too! You can only make one save per disk – the original save file gets overwritten by subsequent ones, so to play effectively, you will need to have at least half a dozen formatted disks to hand.

The trouble with this game is that the limitations of the command system do not allow for any subtlety and depth. Once started, it has a certain addictive quality, but I doubt that it will find much favour among those who enjoy a good, meaty, Infocom, Scrolls, or Level 9 adventure.

Chrono Quest is a big game, coming on four disks for the ST, and three for the Amiga, but even so, it's overpriced at nearly 30 quid. Oh, and I nearly forgot to mention – it's French. Despite trying hard, I have never found a French adventure that is logical and absorbing yet.

► VOCABULARY	4
► COMPLEXITY	8
► PERSONAL	5
► VALUE	6

▼ *Don't end up at the Taj Mahal.*



JOAN OF A

► SUPPLIER: U.S. GOLD.
► MACHINES: ATARI ST, AMIGA (SOON) AND PC.
► VERSION TESTED: ST.
► PRICE: £19.95.
► REVIEWER: WAYNE.

With the buying public's interest in computerised FRP's increasing daily, it comes as no surprise to find that software houses are now turning to history for inspiration. The past contains a wealth of stories relating to folk heroes, and this game tries to recreate the situation surrounding that most famous of heroines: Joan Of Arc.

In fact you play the part of poor Charles of France, who is only a puppet king at best. The reason behind your unfortunate position is that after 100 years of war between the English and your army (the French), Henry V manages to inflict a massive defeat to your army on 25/10/1415, wiping them off the face of the earth.

Once this has happened your former allies and friends – the princes – either revolt and form independent states, or even worse, become allies of the English. To add to your problems, famine runs rife through your remaining subjects, and disease has reached epidemic proportions.

Around about early 1420 France is all but ruled by the English, and all they have to do is gain control of Orleans to become absolute rulers. However, you are pleased to note that a young woman called Joan Of Arc seems to have been chosen by St Michael to save you from the clutches of the dreaded English and she believes that the only way to do this is to kick the enemy out of France.

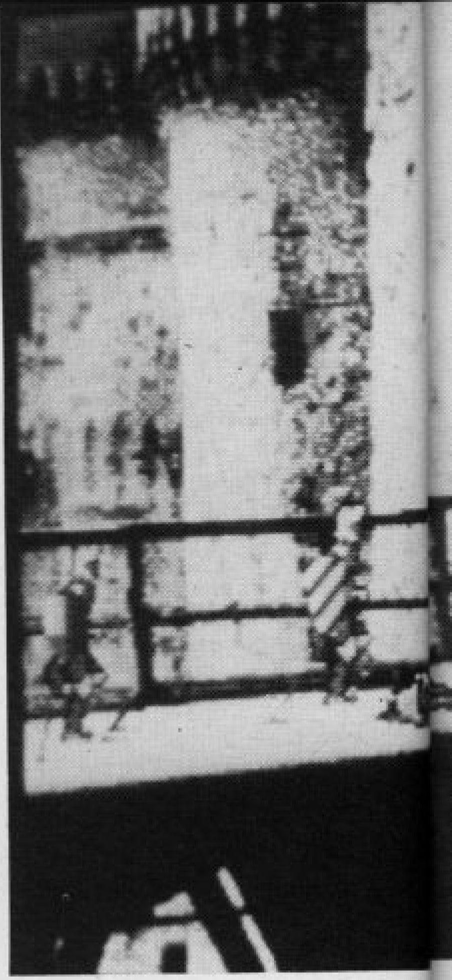
When initially commencing your campaign you are given a map of France divided up into regions, of four different colours. The blue areas are the provinces you control, the orange belong to the English, the brown are in the control of the independent princes and the sand coloured areas belong to the traitorous princes who have allied to the invaders.

Also contained on this map is a Fleur de Lis, which, when clicked on, brings up the main menu, and another icon which serves a dual purpose. It tells you what the weather is going to be like in certain provinces – this is important for open combat as well as the amount of taxes you will collect – and how the same provinces react to your overall control.

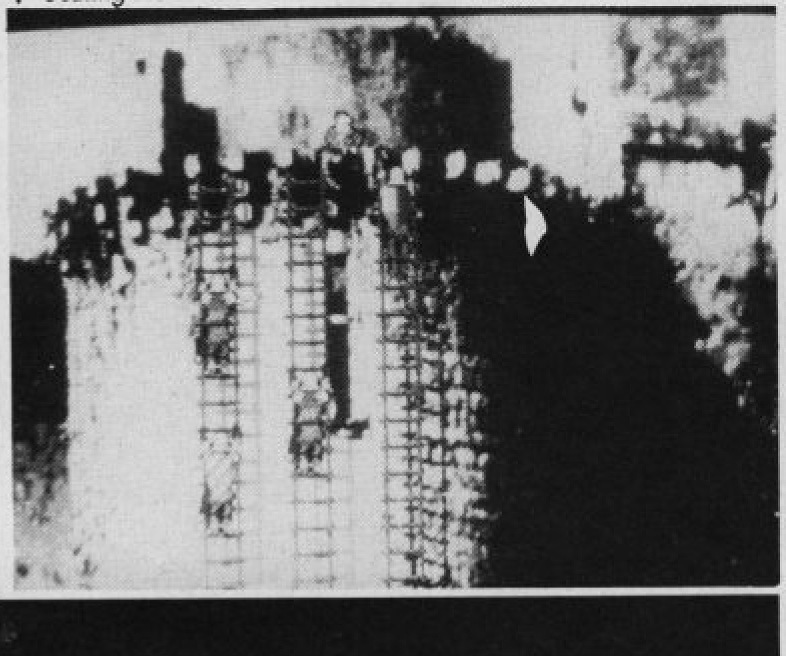
The main menu contains seven options, one of which is available to you at the beginning. The reason for this is that you have to once again be crowned king and this is achieved by freeing Orleans from seige by the English and taking Reims. Only here can you be initiated.

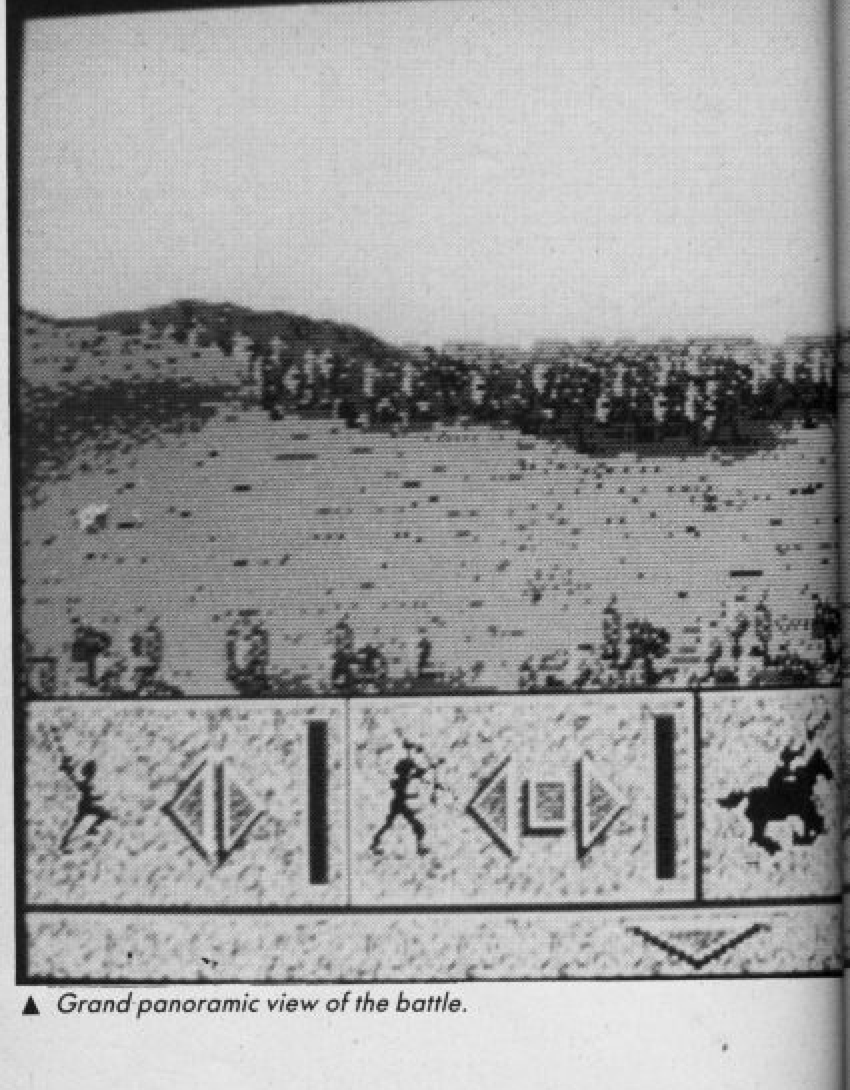
The two options available allow you to manoeuvre Joan's army to the provinces in question. However, you will no doubt encounter the English forces and it is here that you will first have your open field combat.

All the forces are detailed as small matchstick people, which believe it or not really works, as it creates a great, combat-like atmosphere. You control archers, infantry, cavalry and bombards (simplistic cannons), and apply tactics. It is true to say that the armies with the most forces usually win, but you can use

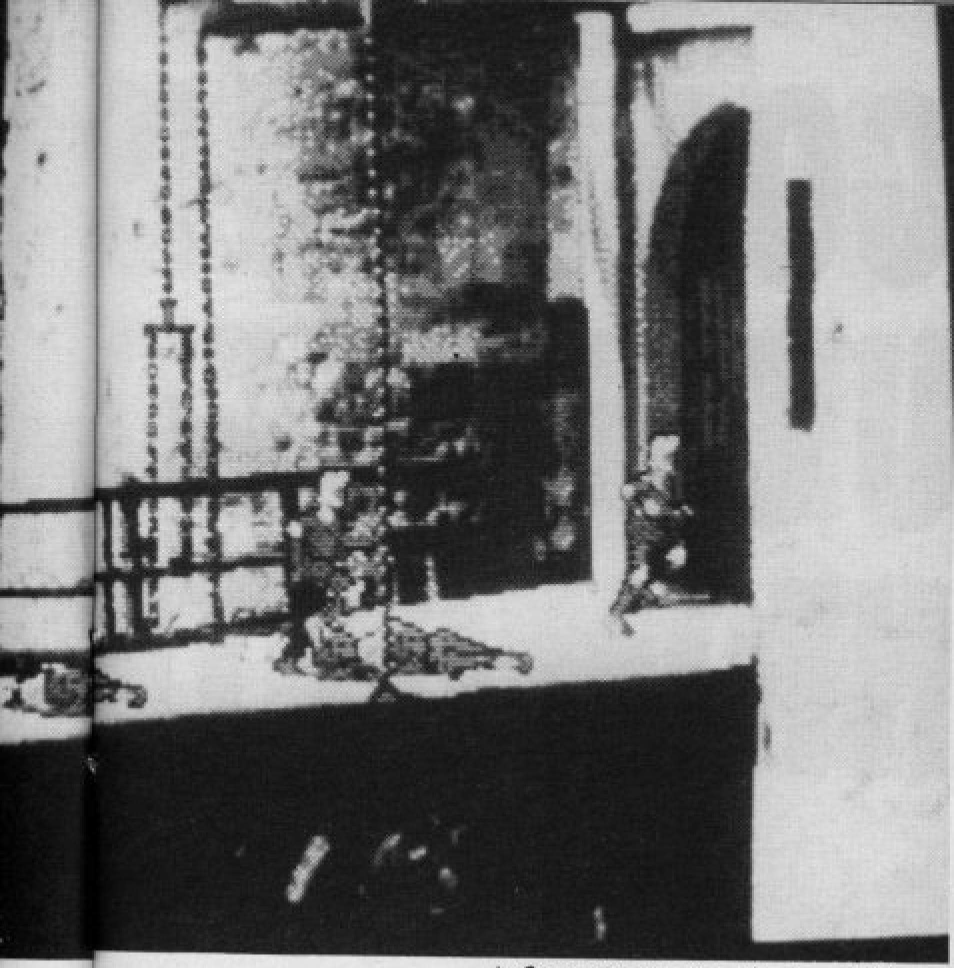


▼ Scaling the castle walls.

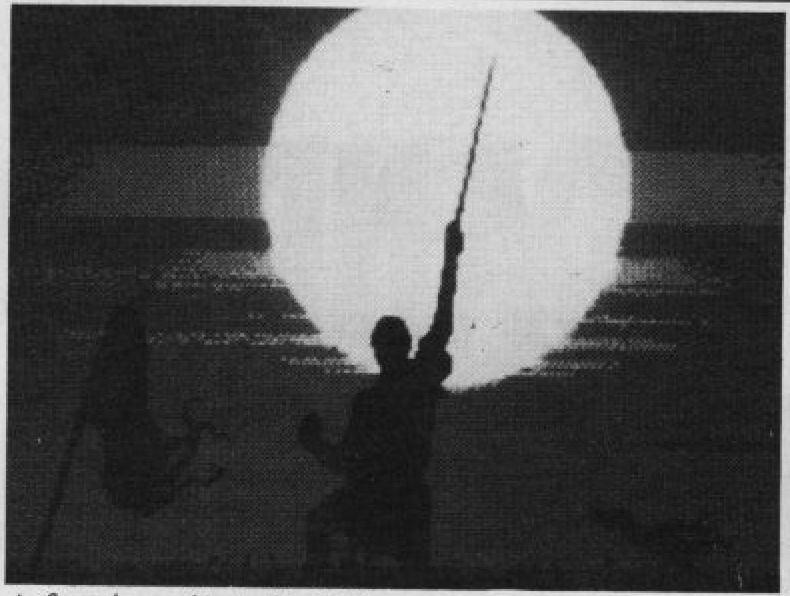




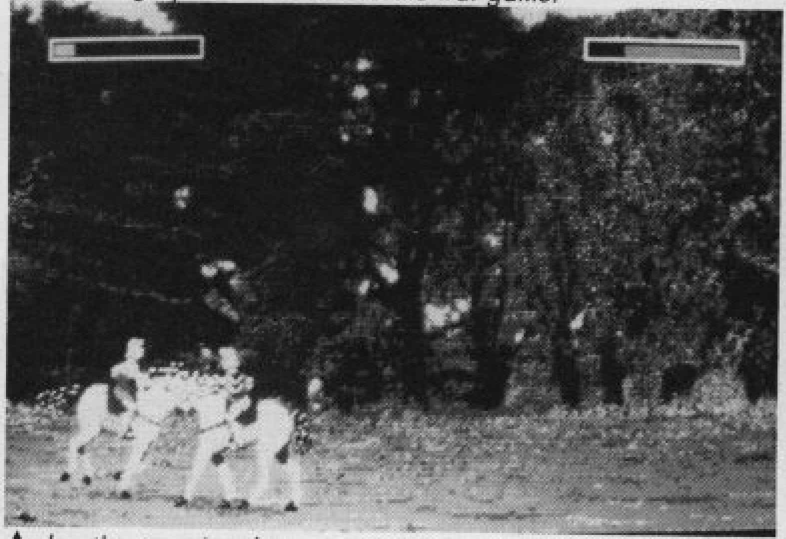
▲ Grand panoramic view of the battle.



▲ *Scrapping it out on the drawbridge.*



▲ *Superb graphics in this RPG/come war game.*



▲ *Jousting to gain advantage.*

RC



wargaming tactics to allow a smaller force to become victorious.

Once crowned, you can begin the game proper. The six other powers available to you are: Diplomacy, Espionage, Helping Hand, Royal Treasury, Royal Justice and Raising a Royal Army.

The Royal Treasury option is the only other action apart from Starting a Campaign that does not deal with a game's characters. Here you are allowed to collect two forms of taxes: a Health tax – that can be collected once a year in September – and a Tithe, which is a supplementary tax that can be levied at any time. The latter is hated by the populace, and will probably incite the province in question to rebel and not pay any further taxes!!

The other options involve you dealing with characters who are either your allies, your enemies or neither. Each character has three characteristics: diplomacy, strategy and leadership, all of which can range from very good to non-existant. You must choose the right person for the many jobs available. These range from assassination to conducting peace negotiations. If you don't send the right people, your servants could be arrested and imprisoned if the negotiations go badly. There are nearly 30 characters to interact with and this injects a great deal of fun into the game.

Once you have levied some taxes and have managed to raise an army, you can attack English controlled towns and garrisons. You do this by playing a two-part arcade game. First of all your character (which represents the whole army) has to cross a drawbridge and enter the castle. This means avoiding arrows, while conducting combat with guards at the same time. Once this is done your character has to scale one of three ladders, avoiding the boulders and boiling oil that are thrown at you.

Of course if the English army attacks your castle, you have to play the part of defender, hurling the boulders and tipping the oil off the ramparts so as to stop the opposing forces taking control.

Also on your travels you meet various individual knights who challenge your guard. This means that you get involved in mounted combat, with a selection of weapons in a fight to the death! However, there is no detrimental outcome if you lose.

Joan has a lot of things going for it. It looks good, using animated cartoon graphics imposed on digitised picture backgrounds. Furthermore the diplomacy, tactics and strategy angles provide many thought provoking challenges.
Economics also plays a big part and is another facet to conquer.

However, for every good aspect *Joan* has going for it, there is a bad one. For example the game has many horrendous loading sequences and I spent half my time waiting for something to happen or stop happening!! The arcade sequences are so simple that even someone as pathetic at arcade games as me could easily master them. Also, the fights on the drawbridge are about as complex as a 10th rate *Barbarian* conversion.

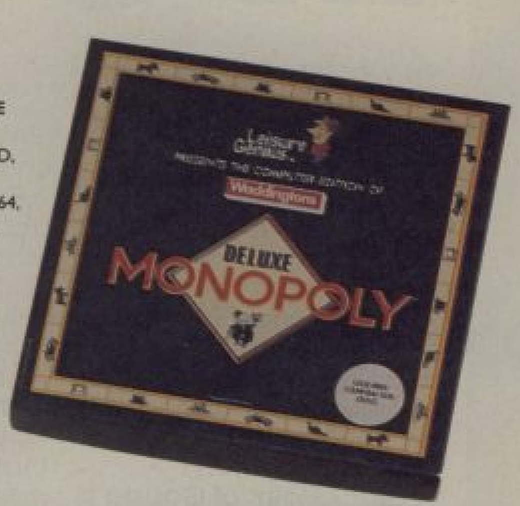
Overall, *Joan* is a fairly entertaining tactical wargame, with both highs and lows. It's not got much to do with FRP, but should provide many hours of play, even if half of them are spent waiting for the game to load or for the rest of your troops to storm the walls!

► GRAPHICS	81%
► SOUND	56%
► VALUE	68%
► ROLE PLAYING	38%
► TACTICS	82%
► **OVERALL**	**73%**

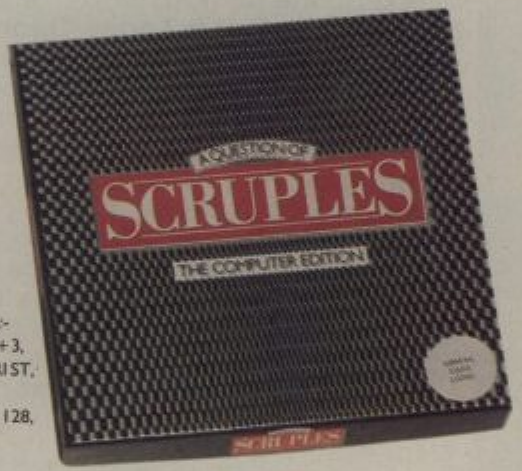
AGM

ISURE GENIUS
OBY VIRGIN ATLANTIC
HE OPERA IN NEW YORK!

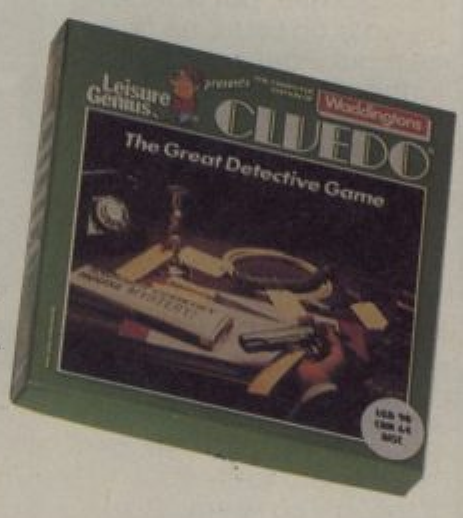




MONOPOLY/ MONOPOLY DELUXE
available on:-
DISC: CBM 64, AMSTRAD, BBC B.
CASS: SPECTRUM CBM 64, AMSTRAD, BBC B, MSX.



SCRUPLES *available on:-*
DISC: C64, SPECTRUM+3, AMSTRAD, ATARI ST, IBM PC.
CASS: C64, SPECTRUM 128, AMSTRAD, SPECTRUM 48.



CLUEDO *available on:-*
DISC: C64, AMSTRAD, EINSTEIN.
CASS: SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD, MSX, BBC.

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This competition will cover all purchases of Leisure Genius product from December 1st, 1988 to March 31st, 1989.

The 50 runners up will win a Leisure Genius game of their choice for their computer.

Don't forget the more games you buy the more you increase your chances of winning.

Good luck and happy playing.

Fly Virgin atlantic

This competition is subject to product being purchased from participating dealers.

AGM Helpline

Here's someone who's really in trouble! Mrs Aldridge of Hinckley, in Leicestershire, is trying her hardest to get the hang of adventuring, but has yet to complete one! Simply let me know what she needs to take from Part 2 to Part 3 of Hunchback, and send a few general tips on Neverending Story!

Patrick Halm of Gouda is after a phone number for a taxi, in Police Quest. Know any reliable ones?

Tim Laver of London Colney, is pestering Islotham Garnath in a festering pit. He's got the Nightspear from the top of Valarian's Tower, but every time he throws it, the attack is repelled. How can Tim finish Islotha off, in Bard's Tale III?

Where has Louis got to? Paul Phillips of Wednesbury, is trying to contact him, but whenever he calls on Louis, he finds he is out. Paul can't get any further than just chatting to Rudy, in Play It Again Sam.

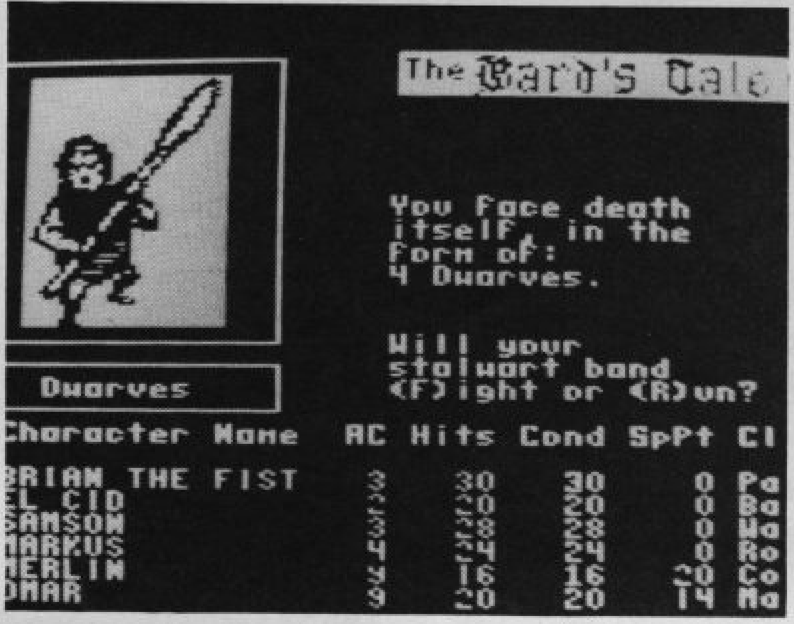
Tony Day of Bromley has a lit brazier, a wand, and the ingredients, but he just cannot mix any spells in King's Quest III. What has he got wrong?

Mandroids and Battle Droids are causing Garry Russell of Halton in Leeds quite a headache. He is playing Necris Dome, and needs help to disable them. It also seems that Garry is finding difficulty with the vocabulary in the game – has anyone any hints for any useful or unusual commands?

Rumour has it, according to R.G.B. Marshall, of Congleton, that I never review an adventure unless I first have a complete solution. Who is putting this around, I wonder? Were it true, you would be lucky to get more than a couple of adventure reviews a year!

R.G.B. (I shall call him 'Monitor') also feels that Level 9 and Magnetic Scrolls are cutting too many corner s in the finishing stages of their games, to get them out quickly. There's never a program written that doesn't have a bug of some sort – the trouble is, whilst it is possible to prove that there are bugs in a program, it's quite impossible to prove that there aren't any. Still, I certainly felt Lancelot was looking a bit rough at edges . . .

Trouble in Bard's Tale.



WHATEVER NEXT? AN INFOCOM BUG!

Andrew Bethell, of Pleck, Walsall, has been playing Beyond Zork for quite some time now. Having managed to solve the crocodile problem just before reading Stefan Englhart's solution, he has come across something even more baffling – a real Infocom bug! Here's what Andrew has to say about it:

"I've travelled back in time to the final battle where the Prince Of Phee lost his helmet (his head was in it at the time). Taking only nano-seconds to grieve for the fallen hero, I leaped into the trench to recover the helmet, only to be beaten to it by the Prince's horse, who picked that moment to be shot, and fell dead – yes, you've guessed it – right on top of the helmet!

"Now the fact that none of my magic works here I could live with, but the fact that the program is also bugged at this point is downright frustrating. Yes, Infocom has included (intentionally I'm sure) a rather odd little glitch, whereby the program doesn't recognise the fact that a dead horse is lying on the very helmet that I've spent six months trying to locate.

POINT LEVITATION AT HORSE
You can't see any horse here.



We have the answers.

POINT LEVITATION AT STALLION
You can't see any stallion here
EXAMINE TRENCH
It's blocked by a dead stallion
MOVE DEAD STALLION
You can't see any dead stallion here.

"Yaaargh! I'll think I'll make a donation to the Infocom Appeal for Dying Horses Who Aren't There!!"

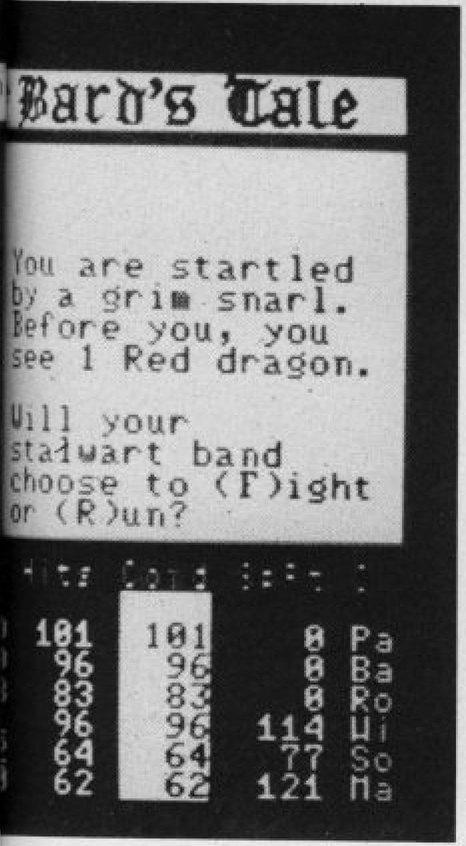
Thanks, Andrew, just forward the cash to these offices, and we'll use it for research – to see if we can kill off a bottle of White Horse which is DEFINITELY there, in the pub next door . . .

SHADOWGATE PROBLEMS

The Shadowgate saga continues! Allen and Mark Errington feel sure that the complete solution to the game lies in the collective heads of C+VG's adventurers – but not in theirs alone! They assume that the key to the snake statue over the bridge is the wind. Trouble is, they haven't yet located the bridge! "Is it the one used to get over the lava?" they ask, also wanting to know the whereabouts of the key to the well room.

P. O'Donnell of Preston writes in with a few of the answers, and begs some more: What is the silver goblet for, and where can he find the staff of ages?

Meanwhile, Matthew Hill of Brighton is baffled by



Alan Wilson's recent mention of the snake statue. Matthew would like to hear from you Alan. His address is 32 Chalkland Rise, Woodingdean, Brighton, E. Sussex BN2 6RH.

Between them, these four readers have come up with a few clues. Check them out in the clues section, and in return, send your own, if you think you can help!

BARD'S TALE II – MARK'S WAY

Mark Barnes of Strathpine, in Queensland, is a keen player of Bard's Tale II, and offers the following tips on strategy to aid other players:

1. Always include at least one bard, one magician, and one conjuror in your party.
2. Create another magician and advance him to sorceror as soon as possible.
3. All non-magic users should be equipped with bows and arrows.
4. All magic users should be equipped with lamps or light wands.
5. If you have entered Level 3 without a sorceror, fall upon your sword – it will be less painful.
6. If possible, make detailed maps and then send them to Mark at Flat 2-8 Dorothy Street, Strathpine 4500, Queensland, Australia.

Clues

Thanks for the help this month to: Allen and Mark Errington, Durham; Matthew Hill, Brighton; P.O'Donnell, Preston; Lelly and Cyril, Hull; and Andrew Bethell, Walsall.

SHADOWGATE:

The wraithe can be destroyed by operating the unusual torch on it. Kill the chained up lady in the tower with silver arrow, before taking the Golden Thorn.

Blue hairs on your hands are just another way to die. Wear the gauntlet to get the flute.

JACK THE RIPPER:
Get the French doll and behead it.

RIGEL'S REVENGE:
Introduce the bomb, and the guards leg it!

Pull the bar, pull it hard, use the medikit, and bend it up, to escape from the kitchen. And don't forget to remove the medikit before leaving!

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS:
The answer to the riddle is a riddle!

WOLFMAN:
Insert the key, pull it, and then remove it, to open the cabinet.

Letters

WOT NO WAR GAMES

Dear C+VG

I was most impressed with your new AGM section. It is nice to see a games mag devoting this much space to more advanced games.

Arcade games are fine for younger people but I have had my computer for several years now (a trusty 64, thinking of getting an Amiga) and now I enjoy something a lot more challenging.

I have Gunship, several adventures, and recently purchased AD&D which is superb.

Just one gripe about AGM – why no war games? I have heard of some brilliant new war simulations being developed in the United States.

Is AGM going to cover war games or is it just adventures and RPG'S?

Mark Smitten,
Redhill.

Editor's reply: We certainly will be covering war games. We have recruited an expert in the field and he is working on some reviews for the next issue right now. AGM's brief is to cover all thinking games as effectively as possible.

RISKY BUSINESS

Dear C+VG,

I have heard that there is going to be a computer game of Risk.

Is it possible to get someone to review it in AGM?

Sean Usher,
Belfast.

Editor's reply: Don't miss the February issue. We not only take Risk to bits but will also check out Espionage and anything else we can get our hands on.

AGM IS BAD

Dear C+VG,

Wonderful, brilliant, fabulous – well done C+VG – AGM is just what the Doctor ordered.

I have been thinking of trying role playing games for ages now – being a keen adventurer.

AGM has finally made me make up mind. As soon as I see a computer RPG that looks good I am going to buy it and give it a try.

I would have a go on D+D only I tried it once on the board game and didn't enjoy it very much.

Anyway keep up the good work in AGM. Its so nice to see something new and exciting in the computer games scene.

Steve Earle,
Warrington.

Editor's reply: Thanks for the kind words, Steve. I think you are wrong about D&D though. For a start the SSI computer rendition is based on AD&D, not D&D, so it is much more advanced. It is an excellent introduction to role playing by computer. Mind you if you don't fancy it don't dispair – AGM will be stuffed with RPG's from now on.

AGM IS BAD

Dear C+VG,

What is going on? I have been reading the adventure column for five years. It is my favourite part of the magazine by far and I always turn to it first. Imagine my horror when I pick up the December issue to find it merged in with blasted board games.

What have these board games got to do with computer games and why are they in C+VG? After all if I wanted to read about this sort of thing I would buy White Dwarf.

But back to my main point. Why the down grade in adventure coverage? The AGM section may be bigger in total but no more space was given to adventure than usual.

John Brightling,
Surrey.

Editor's reply: I am sorry John, but the simple truth is that there is less in C+VG about adventures because there are less adventures.

AGM

DARK FUTURE

► GAME: DARK FUTURE.
► CREATED BY: RICHARD HALLIWELL.
► SUPPLIED BY: GAMES WORKSHOP.
► PRICE: £19.99.
► COMPLEXITY: FAIRLY EXPERIENCED UPWARDS.
► REVIEWER: WAYNE.

America 1995. The USA has undergone many economic changes which have catered the American way of life drastically. Pollution has reduced the Great Lakes to nothing more than shallow waterways, the once mighty Mississippi has been reduced to a trickle and Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming have become desert wastelands.

If you are rich, then life is fine. You can live an almost trouble free life in a Policed Zone (PZ), behind electrified fences, and enjoy your wealth. However, if you are poor you have nothing to live for. Life is harsh at best and the only natural course is rebellion.

Most of the rebels are affiliated to Motorized Gangs, who inflict terror and fear on the scattered communities along the interstates. Each gang is a law unto itself and wars between gangs are commonplace.

The threat of these gangs grew so great that a law was passed which paved the way for a new breed of Law person; The Sanctioned Operative (SO).

SO's cruise the interstates in their heavily armed Interceptor cars, with one purpose in mind, which is to seek and destroy. They are either hired by the authorities and paid a bounty to track down gang leaders and dispose of them, or employed by communities to defend it from predatory gangs. This is the basis behind the whole game, Outlawed Motorized Gangs V's Sanctioned Ops.

The packaging and game design is excellent.

The box contains four miniature clip together plastic cars with various interchangeable weapons, four motor bikes, a quick start rulesheet, a 100 page rulebook, 12 feet of full colour track, a countless number of hazard tokens, acetate spin circle and range ruler plus 3 six sided dice.

All the components are top notch except for the vehicles which I found akin to a free gift that you would expect to drop out of a breakfast cereal packet!

On the plus side however, GW have designed the rulebook in such a way that it can be taken apart and placed into an A4 ring binder.

Talking of rules, the designer of the game, one Richard Halliwell, the brains behind the Warhammer system, claims that the rules are "Comprehensive rather than complex". I can agree with him here, as the rules are well written and contain a lot of easy to understand examples.

The aim of the game is to dispose of your opponent. This can be done in several ways, the destruction of your opponents car being most likely. However, you can lose your opponent, they are deemed to be too far behind to catch you up.

The combat system is easy to master. The damage you can inflict to your opponents vehicle depends on the kind of weapon that you use.

You can start playing Dark Future straight away, as you are supplied with Tournament Rules, which are a brief precis of the main aspects of the game. This allows you to find your feet very easily.

My major complaint is that GW have decided to call this game a "3D Roleplaying Game," and in all honesty it isn't. If we applied GW's 3D roleplaying understanding to other games then they would have to class Monopoly along side Dark Future.

OK, you are supplied with a great deal of background information in the rule book, and you can discover the personalities behind a few of the car drivers, what life in the city is like and how deadly life on the highways may be, but you can't enhance a character as there are no rules to cover character creation or character development.

Another gripe is that this game is hardly original. Halliwell has unashamedly borrowed from many futuristic movies, especially the Mad Max series and almost all of the artwork confirms this. Also there is far too much dependance on death-chaos-chainsaw-spikey bits for my liking. If you require a role playing game, which has character development, logical progression and player interaction, forget Dark Future and buy the Middle Earth Role Playing Systems instead.

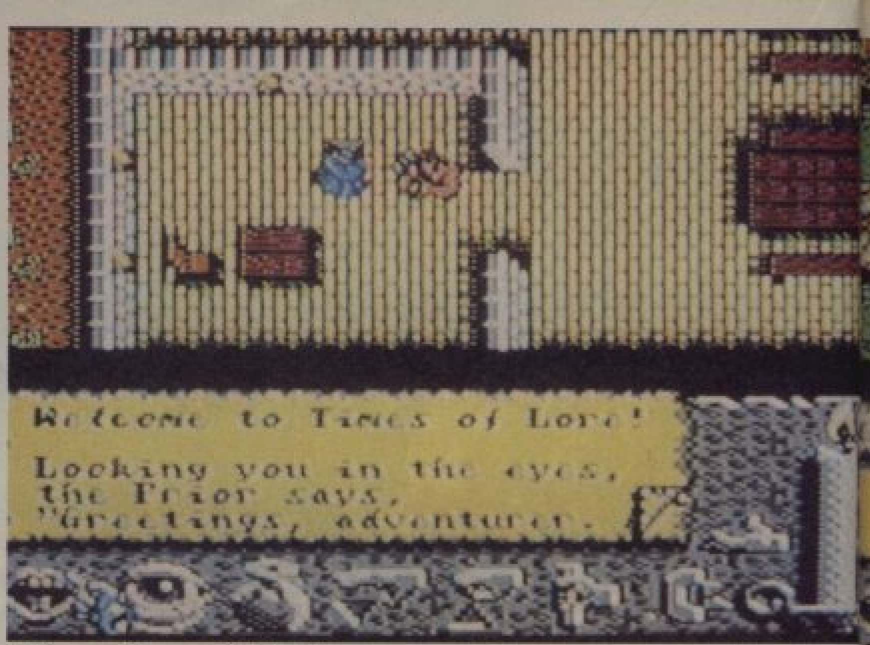
► PLAYABILITY	6
► COMPLEXITY	6
► DESIGN	7
► PRESENTATION	10
► VALUE FOR MONEY	7



▲ *Good board game – shame about its role playing calibre.*


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AGM



▲ Times of Lore – Origin's best yet.



TIMES O

► MACHINES: C64, SPEC, AMS, ST, AMIGA, PC.
► SUPPLIER: ORIGIN SYSTEMS INC.
► PRICE: C64, SPEC, AMS CASSETTE, £9.95, DISC £14.95.
► VERSION TESTED: C64.
► REVIEWER: TONY DILLON.

Every once in a while a game appears that is just so dazzling it makes the rest of the industry sit up and pay attention. Times of Lore is such a game. Origin has taken a huge step away from the selective tastes of the Ultima series into the mass appeal market – and by golly have they hit the mark.

Times Of Lore casts you in the role of a solitary character, thrown into an upturned kingdom, recently abandoned by its ruler due to feuds between his people and a race of barbarians in the south. The High King's son was left in command, but, as he is a useless so-and-so, the empire has fallen into complete disarray. Your job is to get the kingdom back into shape.

Before you are sent out into the world, you have to put a character together. The entire process of selecting a character is done by reading the pages of an on-screen book. After the story you are shown three characters at a bar. A Barbarian, who uses only his thick skin as armour, a Knight valient and brave, though less resilient to damage than the Barbarian, and a Valkyrie, fast and skilful – her life force is her most attractive feature.

Select your character by moving a pointer over its head, and you are presented with a faaaaaab portrait of them, with a description of how they got into it all in the first place.

The game is viewed as an overhead four-way scroller, and, yes, I have to make the comparison: much like Gauntlet, except a lot larger. In fact, the first thing to really hit you is the size of the game. The basic map, without going up or down any stairs, is 100 by 50 screens in size. That's 5,000 screens on the basic playing area. The entire game has 13,000 screens, which you mightn't think is pushing the limits, but you will when I tell you that it's a single load game. That's right, not a single bit of drive access at all!

When you begin (as seems to be the case with all Origin products) you don't have a clue as to what to do. This is rectified pretty quickly. You begin the game in the top floor of a tavern, beside the bed you've just slept in. When you come downstairs, you meet a cleric who instantly gives you your first sub-quest.

One thing you may be wondering is, if the game is an RPG, how do you do all the RPG stuff? The game revolves around a set of icons at the bottom of the screen. These icons enable you to pick up, drop, use, examine and give items that you may find. It also enables the conversation aspect. Conversation is a vital aspect of the game if you want to get anywhere. To start a conversation with someone, face them and then press space to get into the menu mode. Move a pointer at the bottom of the screen to the icon of the open mouth, and then press fire. You are then asked if you want to start a chit-chat, or ask the person you're talking to a question. If you choose chit-chat, the computer randomly chooses a phrase for you to say, and an appropriate answer from the person you're speaking to. For example, you select chit-chat with a serf. The computer displays: You ask the serf "How's life treating you?" The serf replied "Not too bad". The 'Ask Question' system works in a different way. As you talk to people, some will give you important items of information. As they say it, it is acknowledged by a gong. When you select Ask Question, a keyword of what that person has just said, along with any other keywords you



▲ Through scene setting – on screen.

▼ Pint of the usual please.





▲ Game play has wider appeal.

OF LORE

might have collected, appear in a list.

You then select one of the keywords, and the person you're talking to will give you any information they may know on that particular subject. For example, I approached a serf, and asked him about any rumours that were circulating. He replied that Barton had seen someone sneaking around at night. The gong sounded and the word Sneaking was added to my list. I then asked the serf about Sneaking, and he said go and see Barton. I went to see Barton, questioned him, and sure enough he knew about Sneaking. Once he had told me, the word Sneaking was removed from my list, indicating that I had gathered all the information necessary on that topic.

Combat in TOL is the main arcade element of the game. As in Gauntlet, you are armed with a basic axe, sword, or whatever, depending on which character you have selected. This is only a held weapon unfortunately, which means you have to get up close to the nasties and hack them to bits, rather than take them at a distance. You can find other weapons, though.

Graphics and sound are amazing. Possibly some of the best I've ever seen on the C64, and I hear the Spectrum graphics are even better. Very high-res sprites and a very clever use of colour make the still graphics look good, but it's the animation that's really hot. The top down view works really well, as does the roof disappearing from the houses when you enter them.

The sound is highly atmospheric. Martin Galway has really surpassed himself both on the tunes to the intro sequence, and on the realistic effects.

As you're playing, you're going to get attacked quite a lot, and as you're attacked, you take damage, registered as a candle slowly burning down to the right of the screen. There are a couple of ways to replenish your supply. You can have a good night's sleep at an inn, at which point you are given the option of saving the game or taking a potion. Potions are dropped by some monsters when killed, along with gold and food. Food is necessary, but doesn't actually replenish anything.

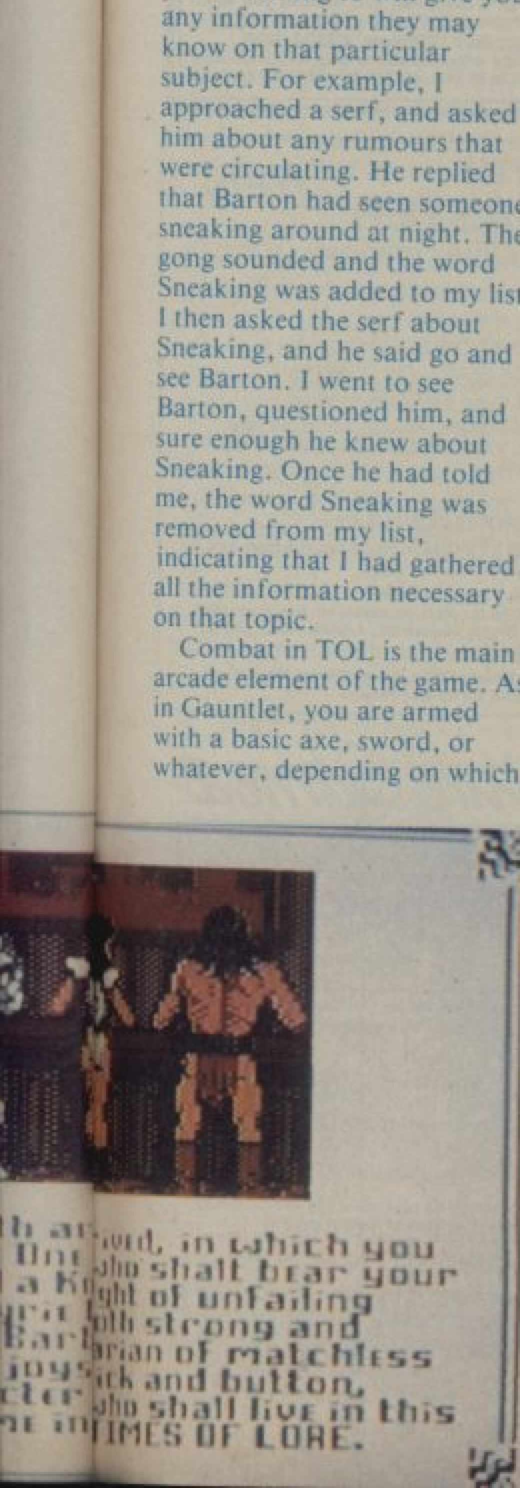
The game plays like a dream. The scrolling starts slowly and gets gradually faster as your character breaks into a sprint, which is very nice, and the joystick response is fast and accurate. It's taxing, but at no point in the game is there the aimlessness often associated with the early Ultima programs. No sooner do you finish one quest then you're given another. I've been playing it solidly for a week and a half, and I'm only on the sixth quest.

Ultima V is being praised as Origin's best ever product, but only if you're into RPG's. TOL is Origin proving to the world that RPGs can have a mass appeal and can be obtainable, even by cassette users. One of the hottest products this year. Take my advice, steer clear of games like Afterburner and Thunderblade this Christmas and get this one in your stocking. It'll have you playing long after the turkey's gone to the cat.

► GRAPHICS	9
► SOUND	9
► PLAYABILITY	9
► VALUE	9
► OVERALL	97%



▲ Your hero.



UPDATE – OTHER FORMATS

All other formats are planned for release at the same time and should be in shops as you read this. They all feature the same playability and game size, even the 48K Spectrum. A masterful piece of compaction indeed.

AGM

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PBM

The Play By Mail hobby took a real pounding during the postal strike. Its now come back strongly though – and is very much alive and kicking. Many of the leading PBM companies offer generous deals to C + VG readers. If you have ever fancied having a go at this exciting form of game play now is your chance. Here we present a complete list of all the companies that make special offers to C + VG readers.

Here are names and addresses of various companies that give away free PBM material to C + VG readers, plus a few hints on how to get a better service from your postie next year.

Please don't apply for more games that you can play at one time as this will only bode ill for the hobby in general.

Bare in mind that all this material might be free to you, but it costs the relevant companies a lot of money to get printed and in the end there will be a lot of players with stacks of unused and unwanted rulebooks, while the PBM companies find them self in financial difficulties. For the sake of the hobby, be sensible about what you write off for.

Jade Games have many games on offer and all of them free. All of their products are computer moderated, and have fixed deadlines! Their biggest and most popular game is **Chronicals of the Knights of Avalon,** which has room for 100 characters per game. It is based around the "discover-as-you-play" system and this means that you know almost nothing about the game until you actively get involved. I'll be giving no secrets away by saying it has it's roots firmly embedded in economic, tactical and diplomatic gaming and involves leading fantasy armies into glorious combat.

Shattered Worlds is a Science Fantasy game, where you play the part of a leader that has overcome a terrifying challenge. You have to lead your forces so well that they can find special minerals, create special vehicles and find a way off this unstable planet before it turns nova!! Furthermore, you also have to combat desperate aliens and other players to see who can escape alive!

These rulebooks usually sell at £1.00 but I beleive that Jade have the odd spare one tucked away, so drop them a line with a large ssae. If you fail to secure a Shattered Worlds rulebook, you are almost certain to pick up a free Jade press pack which will give you a full run down on all their products.

Rhann Postal Games will give you a free start up in their revamped version of **Eclipse**, a game of space domination. You have to vie with the other players and once again, take on the aliens to win. Tactics and diplomacy are all part and parcel of this computerized PBM and all you have to do is send £1.00 (to cover P + P as the rulebook is large!) and you will get the rulebook, set up and first turn thrown in, as well as a large press pack for you to read at your leisure.



◀ *Watch that three headed dragon.*



▲ *Many PBM games now have illustrated booklets.*

Rhann also have a few free rulebooks to their newly acquired game, **Tribes Of Crane**, to give away. This is on a strict first come first served basis, and I believe there is about 35 left, so you'd better get your large ssae's to Rhann fast!

● Contact: **Rhann Postal Games, PO Box 12, Sarisbury Green, Southampton SO3 6YL.**

Standard Games believe that their **Dark Blades** game is top notch and they won't demean it by giving away freebies or reductions. However, if you write to them with a large ssae, they will send you a full colour leaflet explaining what their game is all about and informing you how, if you played, you could win a 12 inch dragon worth around £1,000!! For further details contact **Standard Games PBM, Arlon House, Station Road, Kings Langley, Herts WD4.**

All potential yuppies should look no further than **Waveney Game** for an exciting monetary challenge. The aim of their financial game, **Speculate,** is to make a million by playing the stockmarket! You can do all of the things that real life companies are supposed not to do, and that includes insider trading, asset stripping, bond washing and so on. The first

cont. p.108

Cop that dragon. ▶



AGM

person to pass the million barrier wins. If you wish to take part in this computer moderated game, please enclose an A5 ssae when writing to:

● Contact **Waveney Games, 28 Diprose Road, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Dorset BH1 3QY.**

The final British company to give things away is **The Games Laboratory,** who have recently changed their name from plain old *The Laboratory*. This company have a press pack for interested parties and are also giving away a few **Mage Lords Of Dorm** rulebooks, again on a first come first served basis. Magelords is a computerized wargame, with the usual problems of monarchy, such as taxes, military campaigns, divine, divine intervention, rebellion and of course mass combat.

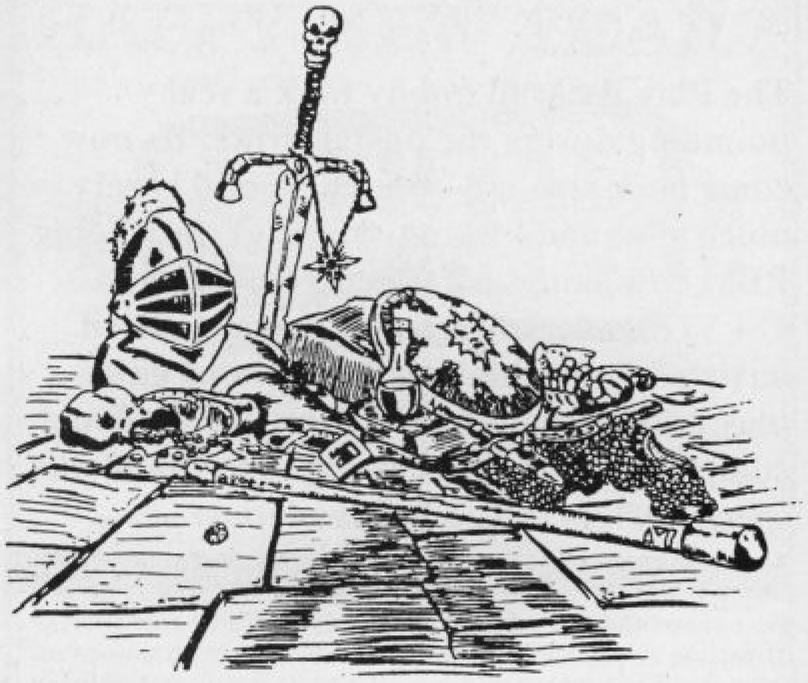
If you wish to join **The Games** Lab's original game, **Further Into Fantasy,** send £5.00 and this will be automatically credited to your account, meaning that you are £5.00 in credit and the start up, rulebook and first couple of turns come free. Large SSAE's are the order of the day, when you:

● Contact: **The Games Laboratory, 18 Ridge Nether Moor, Swindon, Wiltshire.**

Readers may be interested to note that if they contact the following companies with large A4 envelopes and an International Reply Coupon (IRC) to the value of the returning countries first or second class mail, they will send you various pieces of information as detailed below. IRC's are available from your local MAIN post office and don't cost a kings ransom.

Emprise Games Systems will send information on their great space combat game **Warp Forces Empire.** This game is unique as it has it's down language which you can learn, and mastering this will help you succeed in this strategic, future space, PBM galactic warfare, as no outside the game communication is allowed!!

Contact: **Steve Gray, Emprise Games Systems, PO Box 9078-51EA, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9078 USA.**



▲ *Grab the treasure.*

Another American company called **Reality Simulations Inc,** run a totally different game. Based on the gladitorial arena, **Duelmasters** is a realistic game of man to man combat in an arena. Totally computer moderated, you have to pit you fighters in a gruelling test of skill, tactics and courage against any other human opponents, who have the right to challenge you. Interested parties should contact **Reality Simulations INC, PO Box 27576, Tempe, AZ 85282 USA.**



◄ *Crasimoff's World illustrations.*

Compil

The festive season is a time of peace, joy . . . and compilations. This year is no exception, and there's a plethora of collections, assemblages and gift packs attempting to seduce a punter into parting with his pounds. Julian Rignall gives his advice on which ones offer the best value for money . . .

One version of each compilation has been judged, but since games often vary in quality from format to format, there's a full list of marks for all versions of the compilation at the end of this feature, presented as three 'league' tables: one for Spectrum, one for the Amstrad and one for C64 owners, giving a clear indication about which compilations are the best on which machines.

GIANTS

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £12.99 CASS, C64 £14.99 DISK, SPEC £17.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

CALIFORNIA GAMES: Seven whacky events from the West Coast. Superb stuff!
720: Blocky, but competent skateboarding arcade conversion.
GAUNTLET II: Good, but ageing conversion of the coin-op classic.
OUTRUN: A big seller, but very average in all respects.
ROLLING THUNDER: Ghastly coin-op conversion.
A reasonable collection with one outstanding game, and one bummer.

OVERALL 78%

STATE OF THE ART

MACHINE: ST.
SUPPLIER: OCEAN.
PRICE: £29.99.
VERSION TESTED: ST.

BARBARIAN: Great hack 'n' slash fighting game.
CRAZY CARS: So-so race game that lacks challenge.
ENDURO RACER: Poor conversion of the Sega motocross arcade game.
WIZBALL: Colourful and original horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up.
RAMPAGE: Great conversion, but ultimately repetitive.
Fairly good value for money, with a mixture of good and bad titles.

OVERALL 75%.

SPORTS WORLD 88

MACHINE: C64.
SUPPLIER: U.S. GOLD.
PRICE: £12.99 CASS, £14.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Novel and compelling, but the multiload is a pain.
10th FRAME: Superb bowling game with lovely graphics and feel.
HARDBALL: Great American sports game with good graphics.
LEADERBOARD: Classic golf game that's been done to death.
4th & INCHES: Simply the best American football game available.
SNOOKER AND POOL: Alright if you like this sort of thing.
GO FOR GOLD: Excellent six-event sports simulation.
WATER POLO: Unusual, and it's playable too!

A brilliant package; an absolute must for sports fans.

OVERALL 91%

FISTS 'N' THROTTLES

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: ELITE.
PRICE: £9.95.
VERSION TESTED: AMSTRAD.

IKARI WARRIORS: Ageing, but extremely playable and addictive shooting game.
BUGGY BOY: Excellent off-road race game.
THUNDERCATS: Colourful and



ation City



addictive horizontally scrolling hack 'em up.
DRAGON'S LAIR: Mediocre multiload arcade game.
ENDURO RACER: Another excellent off-road race game – this time with bikes.
A good all-round assemblage, with only one weak link.

OVERALL 82%

GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: £12.99.
VERSION TESTED: SPEC.

SUMMER GAMES I: Fairly good eight-event simulation marred by long multiload.
SUMMER GAMES II: Improvement over its predessor, but still suffers with long loading.
WINTER GAMES: The pick of the bunch with seven good events; multiload's a pain.

If you can stand the multiload, it's a reasonable package, but doesn't stand up to the likes of Game, Set and Match.

OVERALL 63%

TASTE OF AMERICA

MACHINES: C64.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: £9.99 CASS.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

SIDE ARMS: Laughably grotty parody of the horizontally scrolling arcade game.
SOLOMON'S KEY: Very addictive and enjoyable puzzle game.
WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD: The best of the series – if you can take any more.
SUPERCYCLE: Easy, but exciting motorcycle racing game.

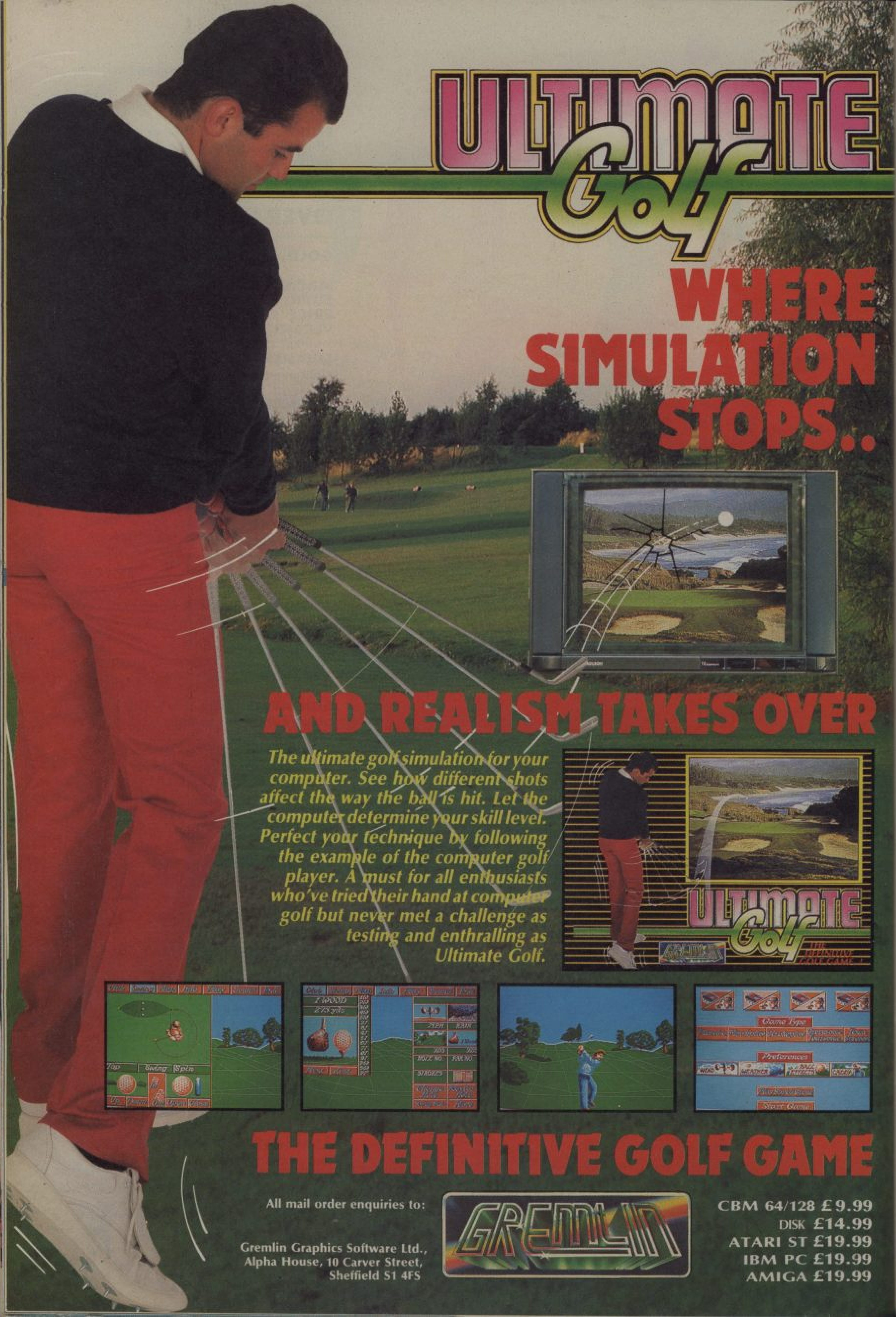
Taste of America offers three nice bites, and and a side dish that'll make you throw up.

OVERALL 73%

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: AMS/SPEC/C64 £12.99 CASS, C64 £14.99 DISK, SPEC £17.99 DISK, AMS £19.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

MERCENARY: Classic vector graphic exploration game.
HARDBALL: Great American sports game with good graphics.
ARMAGEDDON MAN: Very tepid and pedestrian war game.
LEVIATHAN: Uncontrollable and unaddictive three-level Zaxxon clone.
BOB SLEIGH: Hum-drum simulation



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Compilation City

with some token strategy.
SHACKLED: Utterly dire Gauntlet clone.
TRANTOR: Very average and unchallenging shoot and explore game.
CHOLO: Slow, but fairly compelling vector exploration game.
XENO: Rubbish future sport simulation that plays like a brick.
10TH FRAME: Superb bowling game with lovely graphics and feel.

A very mixed bag. Apart from Mercenary, there's nothing really outstanding, and Xeno and Shackled plumb the depths.

OVERALL 67%

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £24.99 CASS, C64/AMS £29.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

BEACHHEAD: Four-level combat game that has aged badly.
BEACHHEAD II: Superb four-part combat game with great graphics and speech.
BRUCE LEE: Classic arcade adventure with a little kick and chop.
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION: Arguably the best-ever C64 game.
KUNG-FU MASTER: Ageing arcade conversion that offers a bit of fun.
GAUNTLET: Addictive conversion of the massive coin-op.
GOONIES: Very droll puzzle/action game. Dire graphics.
EXPRESS RAIDER: Pretty poor Kung-Fu Master game set on a train.
LEADERBOARD: The ubiquitous golf game pops up yet again.
SPY HUNTER: Enjoyable, but limited vertically scrolling blaster.
SUPERCYCLE: Great motorbike racing game that's just a little too easy.
WORLD GAMES: Eight wierd events from around the world: ranks with California Games as the best of the series.
RAID OVER MOSCOW: Fun-packed shoot 'em up with very fascist overtones.
ROAD RUNNER: Faithful conversion, but wrecked by an arduous multiload.
INFILTRATOR: Competent arcade adventure.

Very pricey, especially as most of the better games are already available on budget, or other, cheaper compilations.

OVERALL 74%

ACTION SET

MACHINE: ST.
SUPPLIER: GREMLIN GRAPHICS.
PRICE: £19.99.
VERSION TESTED: ST.

DEFLEKTOR: A rather easy puzzle game, but fun nevertheless.
NORTHSTAR: Colourful and fairly addictive shoot 'em up.
TRAILBLAZER: Average race game variant with a few frills.
3D GALAX: A good exercise in 3D programming, but not much of a shoot 'em up.
MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE: A game-of-the-film that should appeal to kids.

Pretty good value, even though the games themselves aren't particularly brilliant.

OVERALL 74%

GAME, SET AND MATCH II

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: OCEAN.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £12.95 CASS, £17.95 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: SPEC.

MATCH DAY II: The best football simulation available on the Spectrum.
SUPERBOWL: Average simulation that might appeal to fans of the sport.
WINTER OLYMPIAD: Six-event simulation, similar to the Games series.
IAN BOTHAM'S TEST MATCH: An unexciting and bland cricket simulation.
BASKET MASTER: Fairly competent game with naff graphics.
TRACK AND FIELD: Jolly waggling conversion from a few years back.
NICK FALDO'S GOLF: Good a couple of years ago, but now looking very dodgy.
SUPER HANG-ON: Super indeed; a motorbike race game par excellence.
STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER: Apparently the best of its kind. Who's arguing?
CHAMPIONSHIP SPRINT: Super Sprint with a course designer: it's alright.

Some of the games are a bit ropey, but there's plenty of variety and the whole package should keep a sports fan happy for weeks.

OVERALL 82%

TAITO COIN-OP HITS

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: IMAGINE.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £12.99 CASS.
VERSION TESTED: SPEC.

RASTAN: A great exploration game with a large map and plenty of enemies to hack.
SLAP FIGHT: Tricky, but addictive vertically scrolling shoot 'em up.
RENEGADE: Excellent conversion of the arcade beat 'em up.
ARKANOID: Addictive Breakout variant.
ARKANOID: REVENGE OF DOH: More of the same, and even more addictive.
FLYING SHARK: Superb conversion of the arcade WW II shoot 'em up.
BUBBLE BOBBLE: A totally faithful conversion of the amazing platform arcade game.
LEGEND OF KAGE: The arcade game wasn't brilliant; neither is this.

All excellent games apart from Legend of Kage, and even that isn't too bad. A must for an avid arcade gamesplayer.

OVERALL 94%

KARATE ACE

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: GREMLIN GRAPHICS.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £14.99 CASS, £17.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST: The grandad of computer beat 'em ups is still fun, but badly flawed.
WAY OF THE TIGER: Similar to Exploding Fist, but not as good.
SAMURAI TRILOGY: Exploding Fist with swords, and it's rubbish of the very highest order.
BRUCE LEE: Ageing, but thoroughly enjoyable platform arcade adventure.
KUNG-FU MASTER: Reasonable conversion of an old arcade game; still addictive though.

Compilation City

AVENGER: Compelling arcade adventure-cum-beat 'em up.
UCHI MATA: A noble attempt at a judo game, but it's sadly bugged.

Loads of fightin' an' fumpin' on offer – although some of the games are very similar.

OVERALL 64%

TRIAD: VOLUME 1

MACHINES: ST/AMIGA.
SUPPLIER: TRIAD.
PRICE: £29.99.
VERSION TESTED: AMIGA.

STARGLIDER: Thrilling vector shoot 'em up with plenty of depth.
DEFENDER OF THE CROWN: A hit a couple of years ago; beginning to look ropey.
BARBARIAN: Fairly good icon-driven arcade adventure.

Quite expensive, especially as the games are all getting on.

OVERALL 66%

SUPREME CHALLENGE

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: BEAU JOLLY.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £12.95 CASS, £16.95 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: SPEC.

ELITE: Classic space trading game that no Spectrum owner should be without.
SENTINEL: Absolutely brilliant 3D arcade puzzle/strategy game.
TETRIS: Unbelievably addictive arcade puzzle game.
STARGLIDER: Superb 3D vector shoot 'em up with tons to do.
ACE II: Fairly good one-on-one combat simulator.

A varied selection of very high quality games; don't miss out on this collection of classics.

OVERALL 95%

SPACE ACE

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: GREMLIN GRAPHICS.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £14.99 CASS, £17.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.
XEVIOUS: Very tepid version of Atari's vertically scrolling shoot 'em up.
VENOM STRIKES BACK: More MASK antics in this average arcade game.
CYBERNOID: Addictive flick-screen blaster.
NORTHSTAR: Run-of-the-mill trog-across-the-landscape-and-blast-the-aliens game.
ZYNAPS: Challenging and compelling horizontally scrolling blaster.
TRANTOR: Shoot and explore game with awful playability.
EXOLON: Similar to Northstar, but marginally worse.

Plenty of shooting action, but none of the games are outstanding. Still, there's hours of potential blasting in store . . .

OVERALL 70%

FLIGHT ACE

MACHINE: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: GREMLIN GRAPHICS.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £14.99 CASS, £17.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL: All the fun of a night shift at Heathrow!
SPITFIRE 40: Relive the Battle of Britain in this average simulation.
STRIKEFORCE HARRIER: Fairly average simulation of the VTOL jet.
TOMAHAWK: Reputedly very accurate, but rather dull in practice.
ATF: Not so much a simulation; more of a mediocre 3D shoot 'em up with extra bits.
ACE: Fairly good combat simulator, although it's rather old.

A fairly good buy for budding pilots, but not recommended to anyone else.

OVERALL 65%

AMIGA GOLD HITS

MACHINE: AMIGA.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: £24.99.
VERSION TESTED: AMIGA.

BIONIC COMMANDO: Quite a neat conversion, but marred by push-scrolling.
ROLLING THUNDER: Nowhere near as good as it could have been.
JINKS: Colourful, but repetitive scrolling Breakout game.
LEADERBOARD: Same as the 8-bit, but with slightly improved graphics.

Not a lot to shout about. None of the titles are particularly thrilling, even though the games work out quite cheap.

OVERALL 67%

GO CRAZY

MACHINES: AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: GO!
PRICE: AMS/C64 £14.99 CASS, C64 £17.99 DISK, AMS £19.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

SHACKLED: A Gauntlet clone of the most feeble kind.
BAD CAT: Awful attempt at an "alternative" sports simulation.
JINKS: Tedious and repetitive scrolling Breakout.
SIDE ARMS: One of the worst horizontally scrolling shoot 'em ups around.
DESOLATOR: Low-grade four-level Gauntlet game.
BEDLAM: Boring and dull shoot 'em up that's devoid of action.

And you certainly will go crazy if you buy this six-pack of turkeys.

OVERALL 41%

LEADERBOARD PAR 4

MACHINE: C64.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE:
VERSION TESTED: C64.

LEADERBOARD: The classic golf game – incredibly playable.
LEADERBOARD TOURNAMENT: More of the same, but tougher.
LEADERBOARD EXECUTIVE EDITION: Even more of the same, but tougher still!

Compilation City

WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD: Even more of the same, but this time modelled on real golf courses.

If you're into golfing games, this collection is an absolute must. If not, avoid it like the plague.

OVERALL 78%

KONAMI ARCADE COLLECTION

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: IMAGINE.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £9.99 CASS.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

MIKIE: Very camp four-level arcade game; it's fun, though.
JAILBREAK: Bileous mockery of the arcade original. Strictly for laughs.
GREEN BERET: Very difficult, but additive stab 'n' roast arcade game.
YIE AR KUNG-FU: Amusing beat 'em up, but it's getting a bit wrinkly.
SHAO-LIN'S ROAD: Inept platform/beat 'em up.
NEMESIS: Enjoyable conversion of the horizontal blaster, although it's a little long in the tooth.
HYPERSPORTS: One of the original joystick wagglers, and it's still great fun.
PING PONG: Playable table tennis game, with short-lived appeal.
JACKAL: Grotting scrolling shoot ' em up.

All the games are old, but they're all good fun; even the bad ones are good for a laugh! Cheap, too.

OVERALL 80%

IN-CROWD

MACHINES: SPEC/AMS/C64.
SUPPLIER: OCEAN.
PRICE: SPEC/AMS/C64 £12.95 CASS, £17.95 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: C64.

GRYZOR: Tough and addictive conversion of the arcade blast.
COMBAT SCHOOL: Seven assorted events and a combat mission – brilliant stuff!
LAST NINJA: Superb six-level arcade adventure with ace graphics.
PLATOON: Atmospheric and highly playable four-part game-of-the-film.
PREDATOR: Enjoyable run 'n' blast film tie-in.
TARGET RENEGADE: Great graphics and playability; puts Double Dragon to shame.
BARBARIAN: Gory, but very gratifying hack 'n' slash fighting game.
KARNOV: Bileous arcade conversion of the very lowest quality.

Apart from one cabbage, In-Crowd is a marvellous compilation. Nearly all the games are multiload, and offer massive scope for long-term play.

OVERALL 92%

ULTIMATE: THE COLLECTED WORKS

MACHINE: SPEC.
SUPPLIER: US GOLD.
PRICE: £12.99 CASS, £14.99 DISK.
VERSION TESTED: SPEC.

JETPAC: A landmark in Spectrum computing; simple, but addictive.
KNIGHT LORE: The original 3D isometric forced perspective arcade adventure; brilliant.
ALIEN 8: Another superb arcade adventure.
SABRE WULF: Another mould breaker; still as fresh and addictive as ever.
GUNFRIGHT: Enjoyable and highly original 3D gunfighting game.
LUNAR JETMAN: Utterly superb scrolling shoot 'em up; a classic.
NIGHTSHADE: Innovative scrolling forced perspective arcade adventure.
ATIC ATAC: Yet another classic arcade adventure – still incredibly engrossing.
PSSST: Whacky and addictive arcade game.
TRANS AM: Odd hybrid collect 'em up with cars. Good fun, though.
COOKIE: Tough and frustrating, but very addictive arcade-style game.

An utterly superb collection of class games. A slice of computing history that no Spectrum owner should pass by.

OVERALL 98%

Overall Score Table

OVERALL TABLE: AMSTRAD	
SUPREME CHALLENGE	94%
TAITO COIN-OP HITS	93%
IN-CROWD	93%
TEN GREAT GAMES	87%
FISTS 'N' THROTTLES	82%
GAME, SET AND MATCH II	81%
KONAMI ARCADE COLLECTION	80%
FLIGHT ACE	77%
COMMAND PERFORMANCE	75%
GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE	74%
GIANTS	72%
SPACE ACE	71%
HISTORY IN THE MAKING	70%
KARATE ACE	63%
GO CRAZY	56%

OVERALL TABLE: SPECTRUM	
ULTIMATE: COLLECTED WORKS	98%
SUPREME CHALLENGE	95%
TAITO COIN-OP HITS	94%
IN-CROWD	93%
TEN GREAT GAMES	89%
KONAMI ARCADE COLLECTION	83%
GAME, SET AND MATCH II	82%
FISTS 'N' THROTTLES	81%
FLIGHT ACE	78%
LEADERBOARD PAR 3	77%
SPACE ACE	74%
COMMAND PERFORMANCE	72%
GIANTS	72%
HISTORY IN THE MAKING	69%
GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE	63%
KARATE ACE	61%

OVERALL TABLE: C64	
TAITO COIN-OP HITS	94%
IN-CROWD	93%
SPORTSWORLD	91%
SUPREME CHALLENGE	90%
GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE	88%
GAME, SET AND MATCH OI	87%
TEN GREAT GAMES	86%
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BIG Screen

Here's the man who rabbits on about the Christmas cinema releases – "Roger that!" says Ward R. Street.

▼ Roger Rabbit is fab.



It's that time of year again – presents, pudding, crackers and big, family films. There are only two '18's around to satisfy the sleaze-seekers – everyone else is going to see nice, wholesome movies. But even in a month when the 'PG's have been procreating like bunnies, there is just one question you have to ask – **Who Framed Roger Rabbit** (PG)?

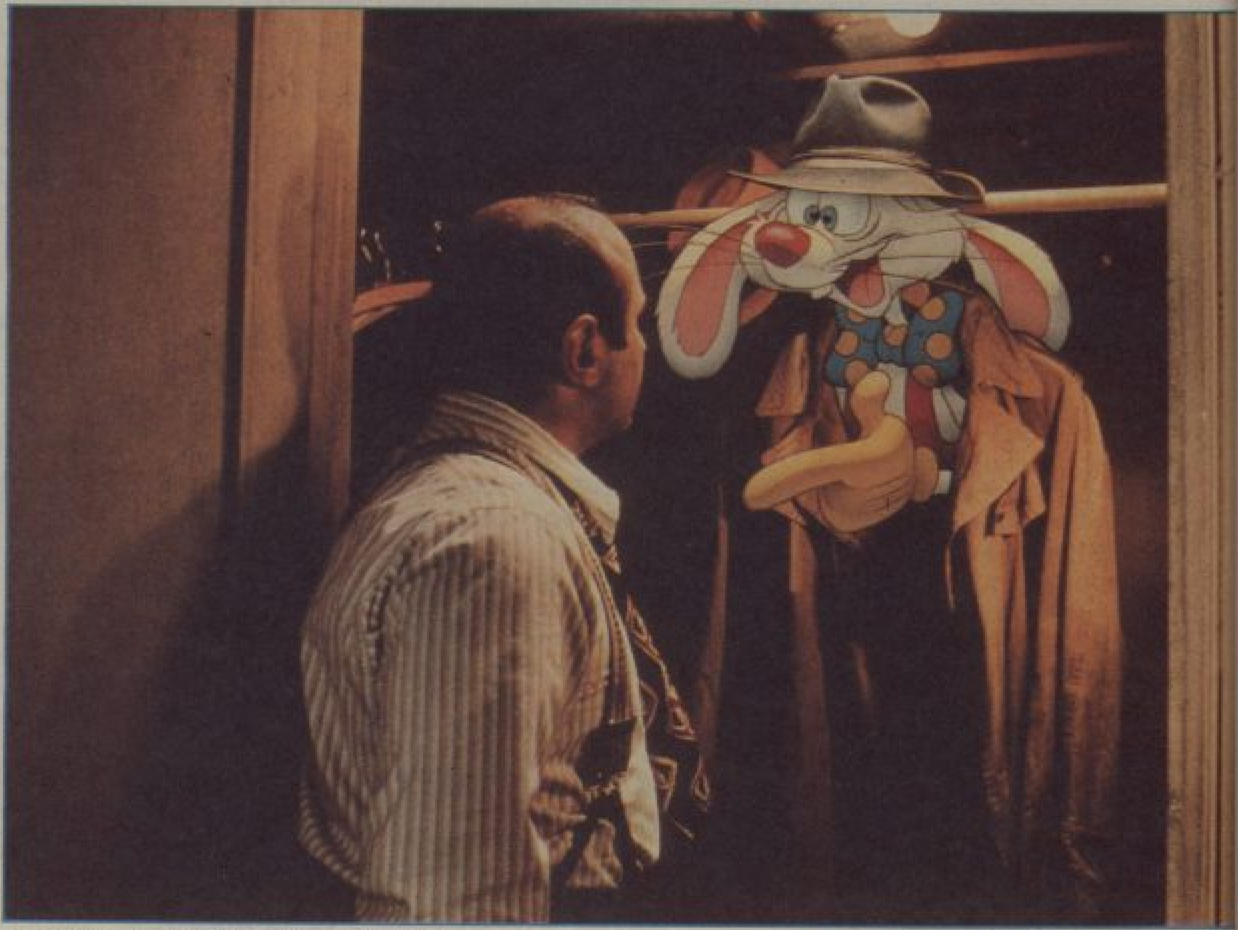
This is the one you've been panting for and for once a film actually lives up to the hype. It's undoubtedly the movie of the month, probably of the year and possibly the decade. Put simply, Roger is the rabbit who gets pulled out of the empty hat – he's magic!

Roger is a star. He's famous in 1940's Hollywood for being set on fire, run over and having refrigerators dropped on his head – and none of it does him any harm because Roger is a Toon. Yes, you've heard of an actor being paper thin, but in the case of Roger it's true!

He lives in Toon town, a Silly Symphony suburb where cartoons rule. But even animations suffer from Tinsel Town problems like cheating wives, and Roger's no exception. Curvaceous Jessica Rabbit is having an affair, and when her love is murdered, Roger becomes number one suspect – even though he insists he's innocent.

Enter Eddie Valiant, a hard-drinking detective with a hatred of Toons. He's so far down on his luck he'd have to take the 'up' elevator to get mugged. Then the crazy, cartoon character crashes into his life and much against his better judgement, Valiant takes Roger's case, only to discover the whole affair is bigger than he dreamed . . . and that the deeply sinister Judge Doom, with his vat of Dip – the only thing that can erase a Toon – is involved!

When an animator combines his art with real actors the result is usually a compromise, lacking the wild, wackiness of pure cartoons but not able to work as drama either. Director Robert Zemeckis, of Back to the Future fame, and animator Richard Williams have achieved the impossible though. Roger



▲ Well, who did frame Roger Rabbit?

Rabbit succeeds as a detective thriller and a dazzling display of very special effects.

By the end of the film you too will accept that the Toons are every bit as real as the Bob Hoskins, brilliant as long-suffering Eddie Valiant, Christopher Lloyd as the black clad Doom, and let's not forget Roger himself – if ever a rabbit deserved an Oscar, he's the one. Look out for all the other cartoon stars in guest appearances too – especially Donald and Daffy Duck playing a piano duet.

Th-th-th-that's all, folk's! Well, not quite, but Roger's a hard act to follow. Still, if Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment is serving rabbit for Christmas dinner, George Lucas has to leap in with an offering which, while it's not turkey, is a little on the short side.

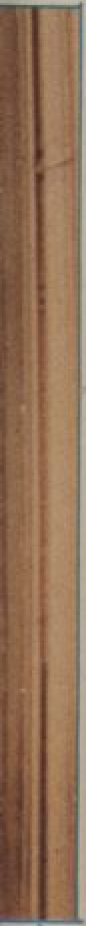
The Star Wars man wrote the story and executive produced **Willow** (PG) and the reason for its diminutive stature is that it's hero stands just 3'4''. It must have been a big day for small actors when Lucas turned his hand to magical fantasy because the Nelwyn race are not noted for producing basket ball players. But Lucas is not a sizeist and his cast ranges from eight inch tall brownies to six foot heroes in this epic tale, as well as a sorceress who's

▼ A dramatic moment.



BIG *Screen*







transformed into a variety of animals.

Willow's quest (didn't you just know there'd be a quest?) concerns a baby who, it is said, will bring about the downfall of the evil Queen. En route to Bavmorda's castle, Willow encounters a mixed bunch of helpers, the most important of whom is Madmartigan, a hyperactive one-time hero who eventually proves himself, falling in love with Bavmorda's warrior daughter in between.

There are plenty of tricky effects, especially during the final battle, which almost strays into Star Wars' territory, but somehow the whole doesn't add up to its parts. Despite looking wonderful there's a feeling that the film was created with American kids in mind and in the end the characters are less convincing than Toons. But it's not an unenjoyable romp – it could just have been so much better.

I actually preferred **Just Ask For Diamond** (U), a British movie made for a sum akin to the tube fare to Camden Town, which is where most of it is set. Based on the book **The Falcon's Malteser,** it's an underage detective story taking place around various London landmarks and featuring some of the worst puns you could groan at.

Tim Diamond is a teenage private eye whose business is even less successful than Eddie Valiant's. To add to his problems he's left minding kid brother Nick over Christmas. Tim's so stupid he can't even look after a box of Maltesers which a mysterious client leaves in his safekeeping. It should be a simple chocolate sitting job, but when the client is murdered, Tim has to rely on street-smart Nick to salvage the situation.

Diamond isn't the best made film around but it does feature a host of English actors in special appearances, including Jimmy (Oz) Nail, hilarious as a thuggish cop. Probably best suited to youngsters, it's still good to see British kids solving mysteries instead of American brats.

For those who like their action harder boiled there's **Blue Jean Cop** (18) – but what else would you expect from James Glickenhaus, director of ultra-brutal, vigilante saga, The Exterminator? Regular readers will know that I loathe gratuitous violence – except when it's done with style, and Indigo Levis Policeman is a case in point.



▲ *Fighting fantasy – Willow.*



▲ *Hello little boy. What a sweetie?*

The film is so sick, so sleazy, so over the top and as its heart, so subversively warped, it's something special. Any director who has to recreate New York's seedy Time Square in the studio because the real thing isn't degenerate enough deserves your attention.

But why that weird title? A fashion craze? No, because a Blue Jean Cop is one who collects payoffs from criminals. When just such a rogue undercover man is shot by a drug dealer, nobody will believe that the junkie's plea of self defence. Nobody, that is, except crusading lawyer Roland Dalton, played by Peter (RoboCop) Weller, who sets out to prove the mitigating circumstances, despite having the whole of the police department against him.

Our two-fisted attorney encounters crime bosses, corrupt detectives, thugs with switch-blades and enjoys some of the most wonderfully gross car chases seen in a long while – and finds time to connect with an ex-girlfriend between bouts of action. Slick, sick and the perfect antidote to Christmas TV!

Patricia Charbonneau, who plays Dalton's old flame, turns up again in **Call Me** (18), the other offering of seasonal sleaze. She's just the sort of lady you'd like to find filling your Christmas stockings, but she has a problem – somebody's sending her filthy phone calls. Unfortunately she thinks it's a joke by her wet, yuppie boyfriend and turns up at a bar that the caller suggests, where she witnesses the murder of a transvestite in the toilets by

BIG Screen

yet another crooked cop! Who'd live in New York?

Going all out to create a sense of flash-trash, Call Me fails to combine its two strands. The woman becoming fascinated by her telephonic pornographer is interesting and the acting of Ms Charbonneay and her Noo York friends is excellent. But the thriller element is less satisfactory and its woman-in-peril melodrama becomes unwelcome as the film develops. It's not a wrong number but it is as frustrating as a crossed line.

Back in the wholesome stakes there's **Sunset** (15), set in the days of silent cinema when cowboys were cowboys and Tom Mix was the best. Only one of today's big names could whip up that old Mix magic – but is amicable Bruce Willis big enough? I'm not convinced that he's quite superstar status yet, despite the rumoured $5 million he received for Die Hard, but he and James Garner make a good team in this clever detective thriller.

Garner is Wyatt Earp, the legendary Wild West lawman, brought to Hollywood to act as advisor on Mix's latest picture. Mix and the Marshall hit it off so well that soon they're visiting a house of ill-repute together – where they witness a murder! This really is the month for mysteries and pretty soon star and cowboy are out to solve the conspiracy of corrupt Hollywood heavies.

It's a nice idea which is never fully developed by director/writer Blake Edwards, but at least it's better than his last outing with Willis, the myopic Blind Date. As undemanding adventures go it's the right sort of picture to dispel Boxing Day gloom.

It's also a lot better than **Like Father Like Son** (PG), the latest addition to the series of role-reversal films. Busy Dr Jack Hammond and his son swap places thanks to a magical serum and undergo all the culture-shock experiences of school/work that we've become accustomed to in films like Vice Versa and Big.

The one saving grace for this one could have been if the son had to perform major surgery – but there's no gross and gory black comedy here. This is a star vehicle for Dudley Moore so it stays pure and 'PG'. The result is probably the weakest of the genre, unless you happen to like Moore's clowning, and it's a relief to report that there are no more movies using this plot in the pipeline.

If you need to like Moore to enjoy his film you'll have to love Michael Jackson to sprint to **Moonwalker** (PG). It's a noisy mess, mixing old promos with a crummy plot about a drug dealer. Lots of special effects as Michael ego trips away to his heart's content and presumably takes it in from the teenage girls who screamed all the way through the preview. Everyone else should (moon-) walk the other way!

Finally there's a low budget beauty which opened at the end of November. **The Nature of the Beast** (PG) is set on the Lancashire moors where a boy becomes obsessed with tales of a giant, sheep-killing creature roaming loose. Meanwhile in the town below another beast, that of unemployment, strikes. It's a bravely British film which is nowhere near as gloomy as it sounds. It's as funny and tragic as real life and deserves to be widely seen as an antidote to much of the Christmas mush above!



'Ere's yer dinner. ▶



▲ *An' I said to 'im . . .*

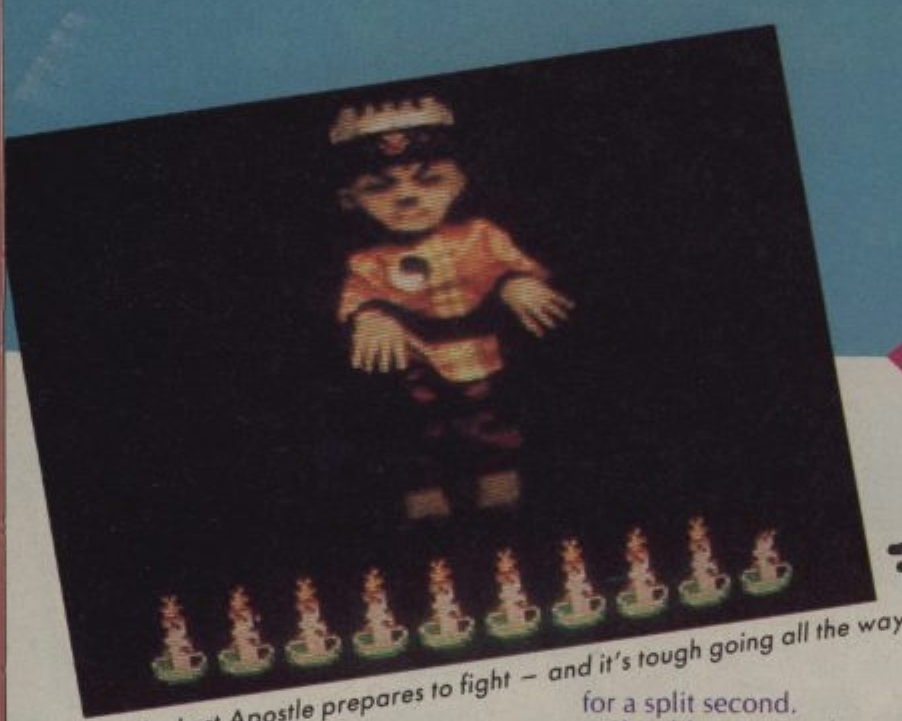



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ION!"

ARCADE



▲ The Last Apostle prepares to fight – and it's tough going all the way!

LAST APOSTLE

The Last Apostle from Homedata has nothing at all to do with religion. In fact, it refers to a Kung-Fu apostle who just happens to be a puppet.

It seems to be an odd way to present a martial arts game, and I suppose it's different. Certainly the apostle's movements brilliantly simulate those of a puppet. However, he's not much good at Kung-Fu.

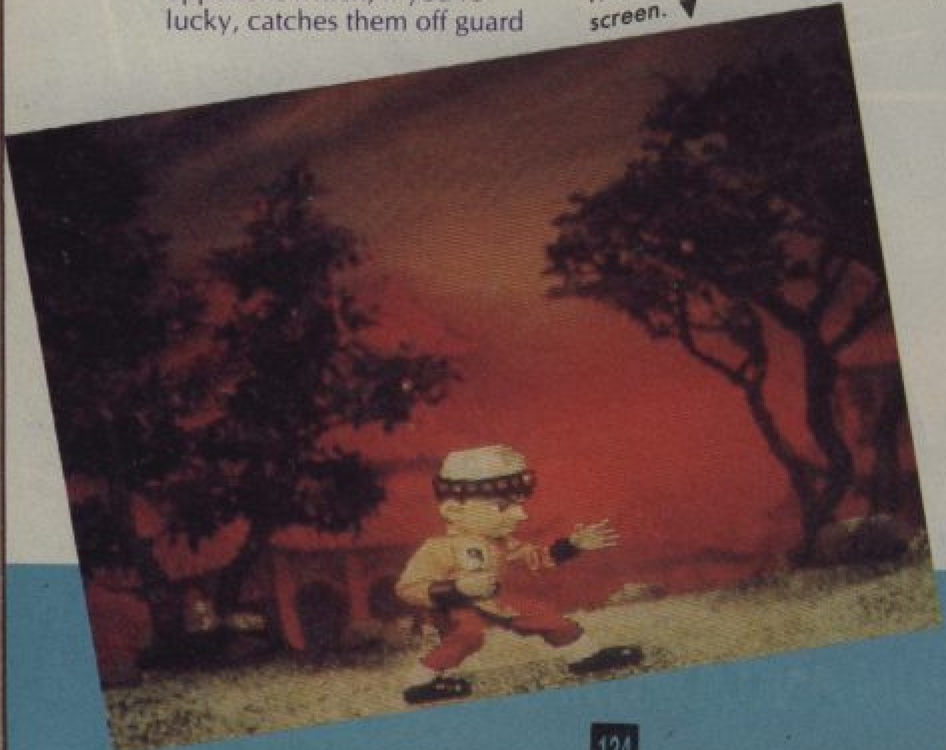
The objective is to defeat a number of Kung-Fu masters and improve your ranking. These bouts are played against fuzzy painted backdrops of the City of Peking, the Plains of Death and so on. Each opponent gets steadily harder and takes more of a beating before he collapses.

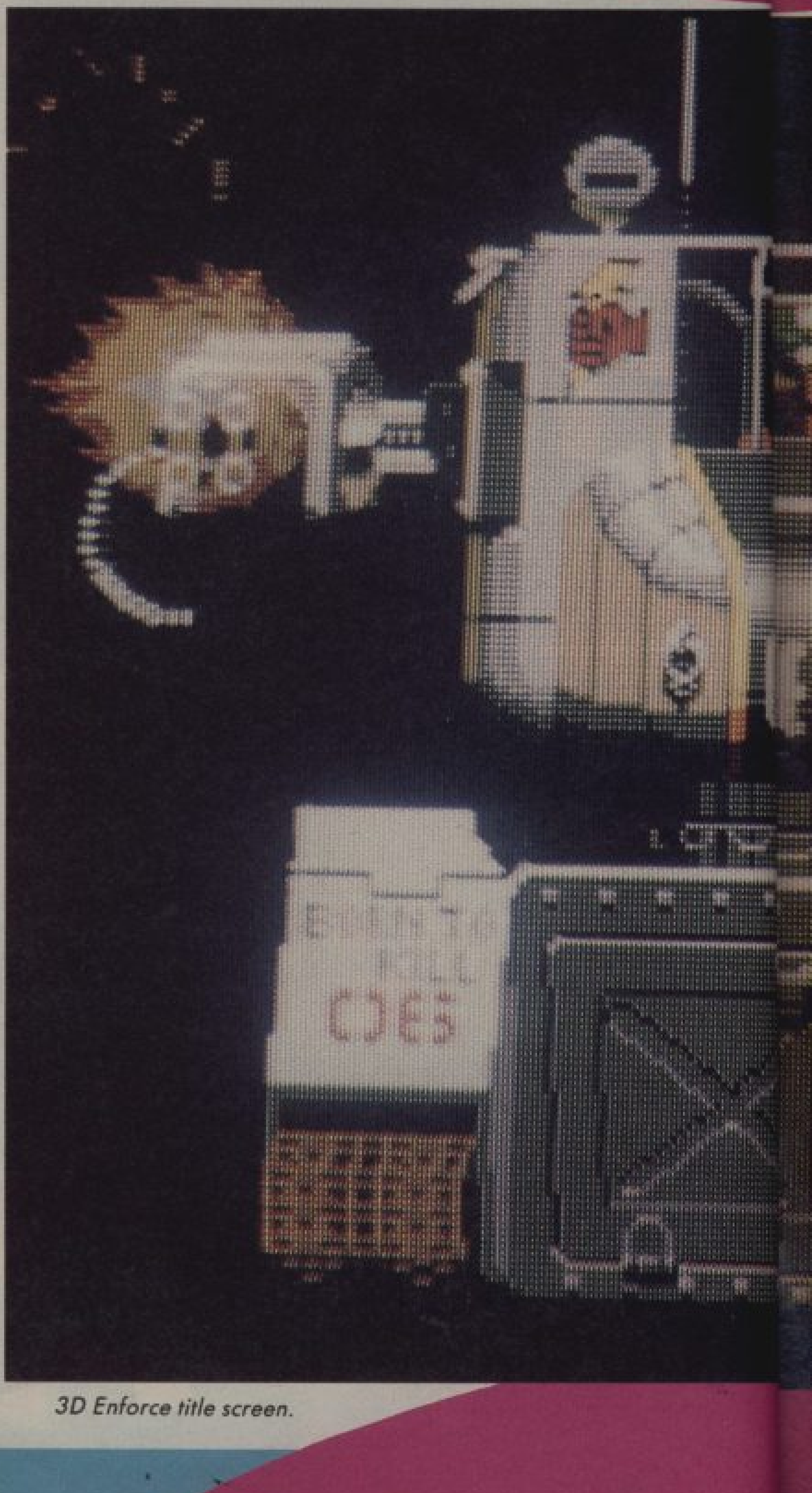
Your moves are fairly limited – kicks and punches at a number of angles depending on which buttons you punch in time with the joystick movement. I found kicks to be the most effective. To get out of trouble you can jump over your opponent which, if you're lucky, catches them off guard for a split second.

Should you win a bout, the enemy collapses and you're whizzed off to the next fight. Lose and your head is lopped off. The going does get tricky from your third opponent onwards though you are offered a bit of help. A stork flies across the screen every so often carrying a cross and chain, which it drops near you. If you catch it your power rating recovers a little. The trouble is that it's fairly hard getting to the cross quickly enough. And if you're daft enough to turn your back on your irate opponent you're more likely to end up a corpse.

Apart from the puppet's movements which are a nice touch, the graphics are nothing special and I found the game very repetitive. The sound doesn't help either – just a series of grunts as you slaughter or get slaughtered. If you want a martial arts sim, there are better and more addictive ones around.

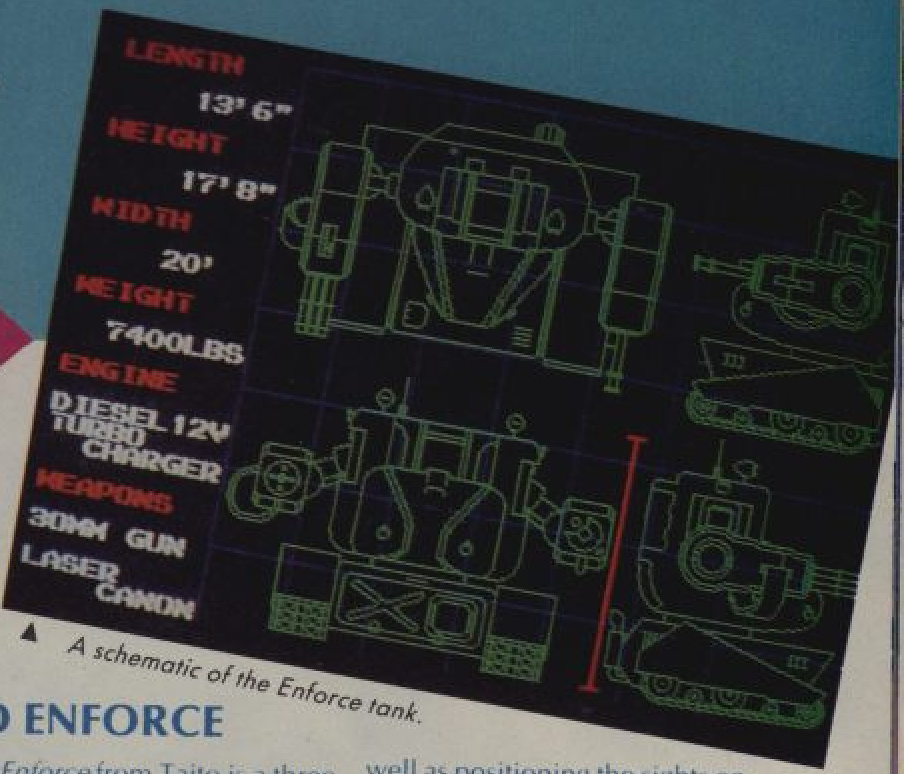
The Last Apostle end screen. ▼



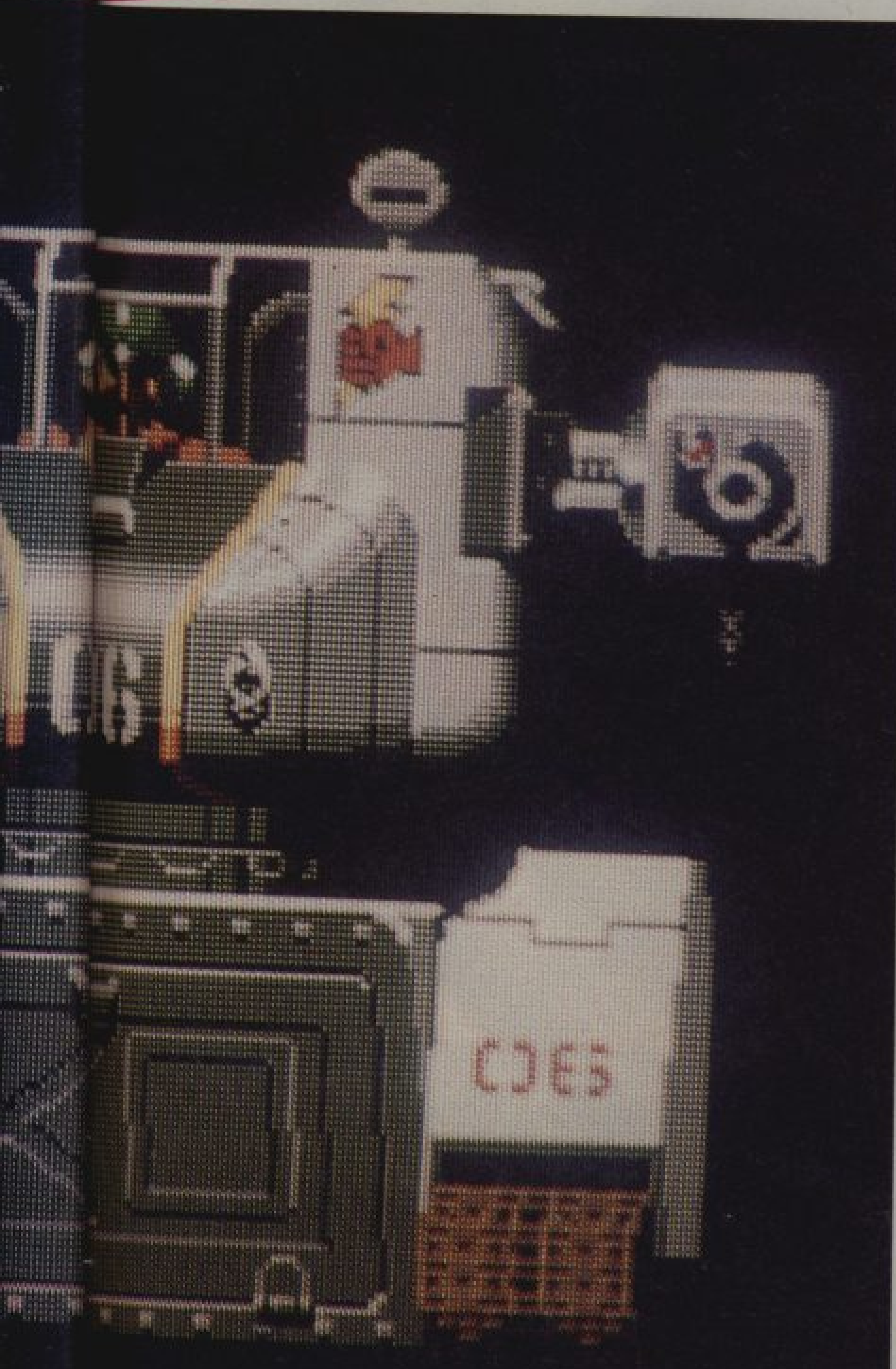


3D Enforce title screen.

E ACTION



▲ *A schematic of the Enforce tank.*



3D ENFORCE

3D Enforce from Taito is a three dimensional tank driving shoot 'em up using much the same technology as that of *Continental Circus.* Nothing unusual in that you'd think. Now comes the interesting bit: *Licensed from U.S. Navy under U.S. Patent 4,021,846* is printed in small letters at the bottom of the title screen.

Well, if the U.S. Navy's using this for training they need their eyes tested. It's just that the 3D effect when looking through the special drop-down specs isn't as good as *Continental Circus.* The colours come together fairly well, but to my eyes, all the objects hurtling towards you remain split images until they're on top of you. And that fouls up any idea you may have of accurate shooting.

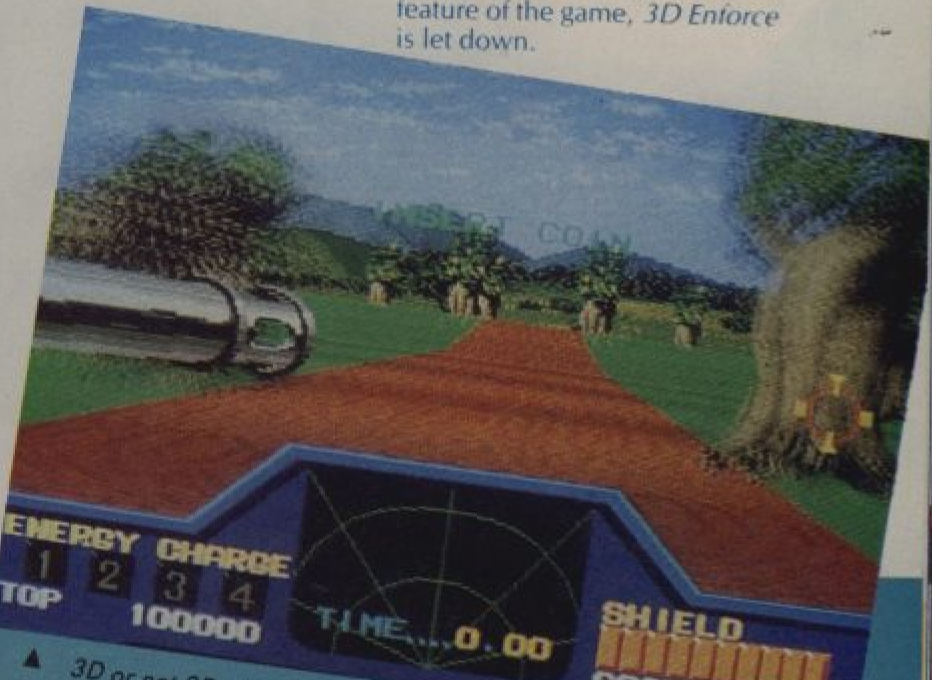
The front half of the tank and two massive weapons are visible as it trundles down the track – a laser canon on the left and a rapid fire Gatling gun on the right. The controls are dual purpose – steering the tank as well as positioning the sights on the mighty forces of enemy robots, tanks, choppers and fighter planes. Use the high/low gear for additional control and speed.

Though the enemy appear initially in ones and two's, you're given hardly any time before the whole lot attacks. Dodging laser canon bolts is pretty tricky as the tank doesn't respond quickly to the controls – blasting them out of the skies is the answer.

Not all the enemy approach from the distance either. Choppers suddenly appear overhead, and armoured infantrymen – Metal Jackets – creep in from the sides and throw themselves at the tank.

Occasionally a chopper appears with a hostage in a cage dangling from its belly. Grateful thanks and extra points are received if you blow up the chopper and save the girl's life.

And that's the bones of the games. Certainly not a brilliant 3D effect and as this is the main feature of the game, *3D Enforce* is let down.



▲ *3D or not 3D, that is the question.*



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ARCADE ACTION

GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

Well, Capcom have come up with another humdinger of a game. *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* is first cousin to *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, uses the same style graphics, the same main character and if I remember correctly the same soppy storyline of a kidnapped love and a clumsy knight charging without thinking to the rescue.

There are five levels of super fast action leading you, eventually, into the bowels of the enemy's castle. You start off in what I imagined to be the graveyard scene. In fact the graphics have been tarted up a bit and the gravestones are now stocks in which are trapped grizzly skeletons.

The ground beneath your feet soon start to churn as the skeleton army rises to do battle. Get touched by one of these and you've tossed aside, losing your armour into the bargain. Let one touch you again and you'll end up a scraggly pile of bones.

Up hill and down dale, through the village and onto the castle. Stone walls can be climbed to get out of trouble, weapons picked up and earthernware pots shot for extra points. Beware the treasure chests. These contain jokers who appear and cast a spell turning you into a duck, or an old and arthritic man. No help at all when you need all the speed you can get.

The weather changes too. At one point you have to battle forward against a mini-hurricane complete with driving rain and still annihilate the flying enemy! Luckily you can shoot in all four directions, especially skywards.

As usual there are end-of-level monsters which need some heavy fire power to finish off. The graphics are excellent, as is the jingle which runs throughout. At the end of each level, you're shown a map which charts your progress and lets you know what's coming next.

Ghouls 'n' Ghosts has all the charm and playability of its predecessor. It's brilliant and should enjoy a great run in the arcades.

▼ *Stop goblin and . . .*



▼ *Grab the ghoulies.*



MR DO

Mr Do, Universal's much loved classic character of the arcades as resurrected by Electrcoin, Mr Do retains all of the originals charm and playability. Even though the game I saw was a prototype on test, I had to queue for ages to have a quick stab at it.

The theme of this 99-level game is fruit. Eat your way round the maze chomping bananas to get extra speed and then use that speed to outrun the enemy. Now come the tactics. The enemy – actually they're walking pears – follow you up the paths you've created and if you can get them all lined up, one after the other, you should be able to manoeuvre an apple to fall and squash them flat.

The reward? Lots of bonus points as well as an atomic pill. The size of the pill depends on how many monsters you manage to squash. The larger it is, the further it bounces through the pathways knocking off yet more monsters.

Monsters are generated in the centre of the screen. Here ice creams and milkshakes also appear, though you've got to be nippy to grab them before they melt away.



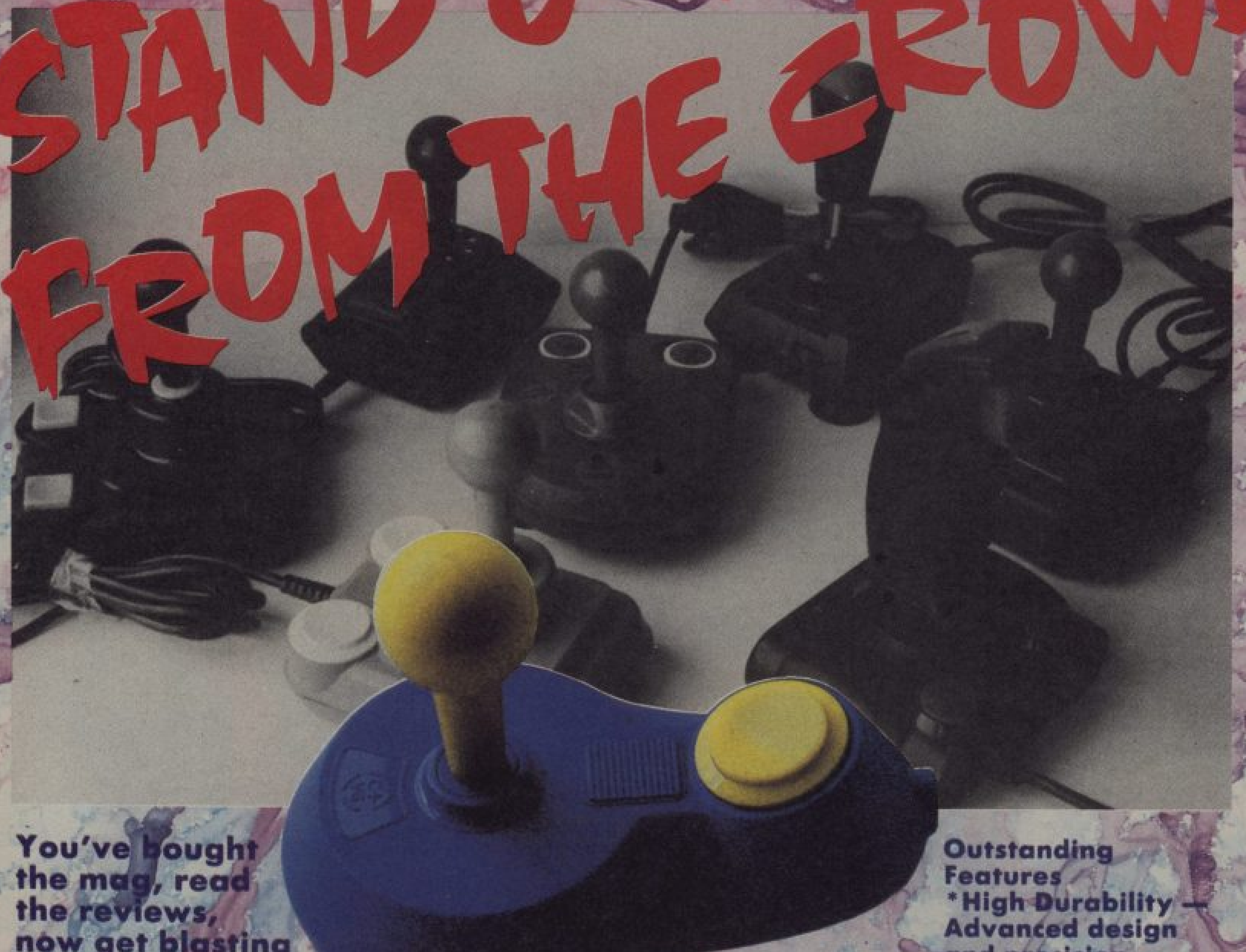
▲ *Mr Do does nicely.*

The apples are the key to the game. Should an apple drop and fall to the bottom of the screen, it breaks in half and you're left with one less potential weapon. Sometimes the apples are buried deep and you need to nudge them hard several times to budge them.

A bonus Mr Do is earned by collecting the letters EXTRA which are highlighted one by one at the top of the screen. However, when a letter falls onto the screen it also releases lots of blue fuzzy monsters. Beware, fast reactions are needed to deal with these.

Mr Do can be played in a number of ways. But it is a game of strategy. The more you play it, the more addictive it becomes and with practice you'll be able to work out how best to tackle each new screen. Don't expect to see it in the arcades until summer, but when it does arrive I can guarantee there'll be hordes of Mr Do addicts just itching to try out their skills on this new version.

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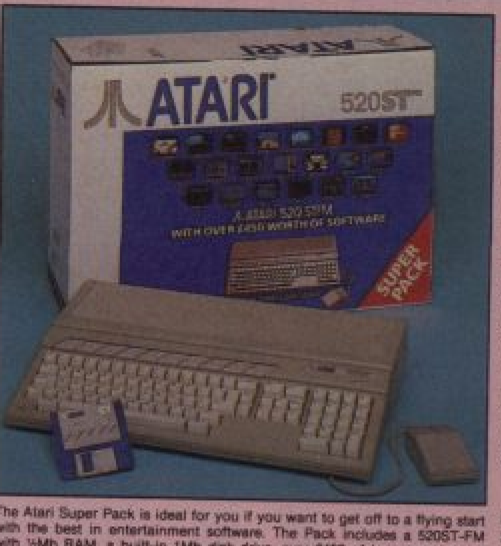
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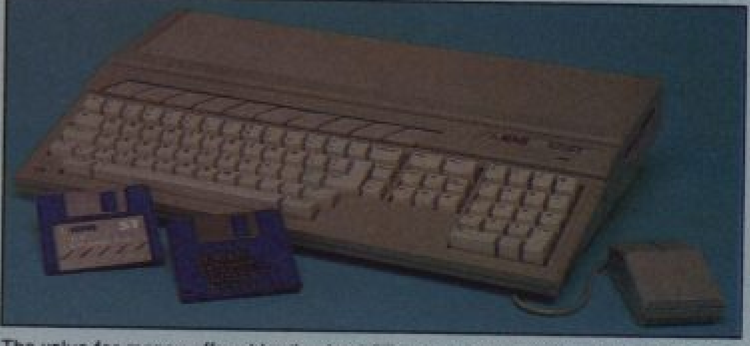
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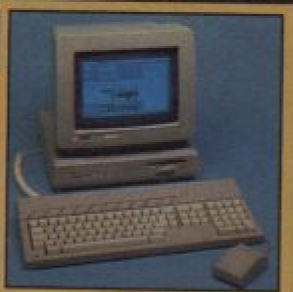
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ARCADE ACTION

KURI KINTON

Kuri Kinton is a tongue in cheek martial arts sim from Taito. The fighting bits are all deadly serious, though the graphics and some effects are fairly lighthearted.

At least the games takes you away from the never ending series of fighting opponents against static backdrops. You start the game underground in a corridor with platoons of armoured soldiers of kick the hell out of. Actually they offer almost no resistance and are soon despatched.

The real enemy to watch for is the occasional Kung-Fu master who really gives you a good beating. First you've got to dodge or deflect the deadly shurken throwing stars and then annihilate him before he beats the pants off you. It's heavy going.

As you travel deeper underground, more and more of the professionals come up against you. At least you have some form of weapon. You can pack a terrific punch by standing still, waiting for a fire bolt to form and then letting it lose on your hapless victim. The only drawback is the standing still bit: While you're performing this piece of magic you're wide open to attack and your opponent won't hesitate.

At the top of the screen is an arrow which points the direction you should be going in. Keep an eye on this as it also tells you when to throw a punch.

The amusing part of the game comes when you die. You fall flat on the ground and a plump golden angel floats heavenwards. She then descends on a continue post and should you put more money in dives back into your body. At which point you're jerked to your feet looking pretty stunned.

Lots of action, large sprites and well drawn graphics. *Kuri Kinton* packs a hell of a punch, and is far more playable than *The Last Apostle*.

▼ *Heeere's Kuri!*



ARCADE HIGH SCORES

Here's Britain's arcade highscore table, where the UK's best video games players get their names up in lights. If you've got some hot scores, send them in to C+VG Arcade Highscores, C+VG, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. By the way, if you've got any arcade hints and tips, send those in too – there's a T-shirt on offer for those that get printed!

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Mean Machines Tips

METROID

Nintendo's sprawling arcade adventure, Metroid, comes under the scrutiny of Julian Rignall this month, as he explains the best way to equip Samus for his mission and how to deal with some of the many hazards that he encounters.

First of all take a good look at the map. Each power-up item is listed numerically – collect them in that order. As Samus moves from item to item, take time to shoot as many aliens as possible and pick up the energy pods they leave

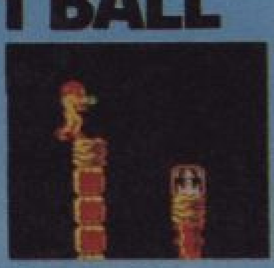
LEVEL ONE; BRINSA



1 BALL



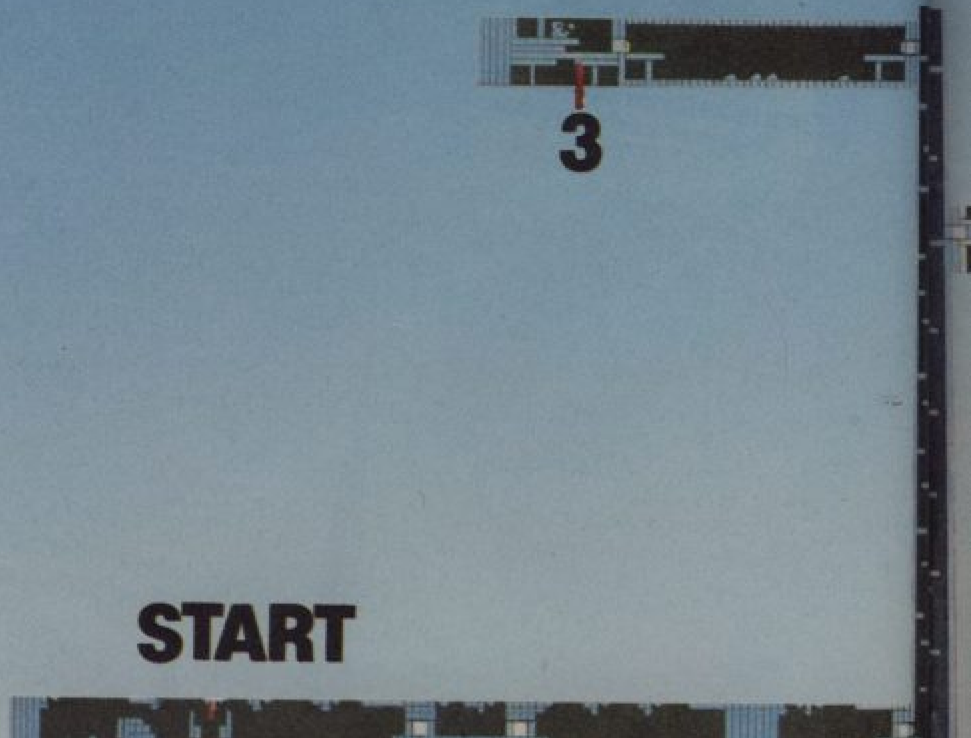
3 LONG BE



2/7 MISSILES



4/8 ENERGY



behind. There's no time limit, so you can take as long as you like and build up a healthy energy supply.

After these nine items have been collected, go to Kraid and destroy him by jumping close by and letting off loads of missiles. In Norfair, Samus needs to collect the high jump, wave beam and screw attack before he's able to go and dispose of Ridley. All you have to do to this creature is freeze his fiery shots and blast him repeatedly. Make sure that Samus is fully equipped before confronting Ridley, or his mission could well be terminated early.

Inside the Fortress of Zebes you need to collect everything you can before attacking the Mother Brain. Experiment by shooting blocks and laying bombs to find hidden entrances. The other thing to note is that not all lava is dangerous!

When Samus finally confronts the Mother Brain, over 30 missiles are required to blow it up — any less spells doom to the hero. Once the Mother Brain has been dispatched there's one more challenge in store . . .

ISTAR ROCEY ZONE



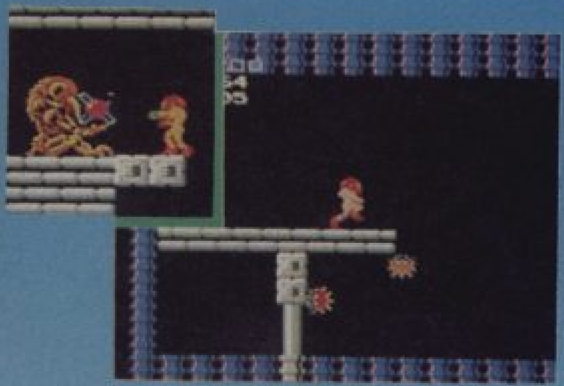
BEAM



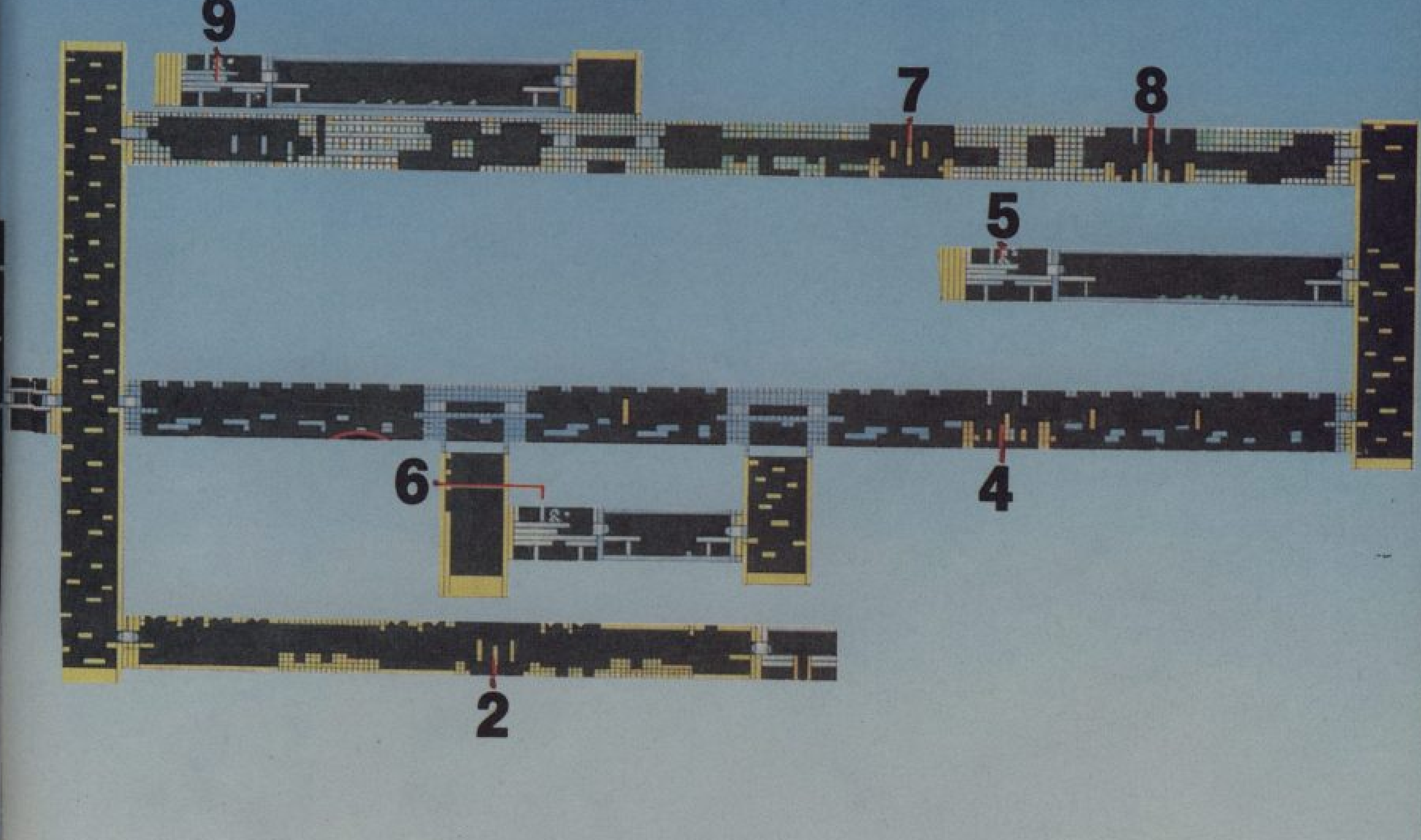
5 BOMB



6 ICE BEAM



9 VARIA





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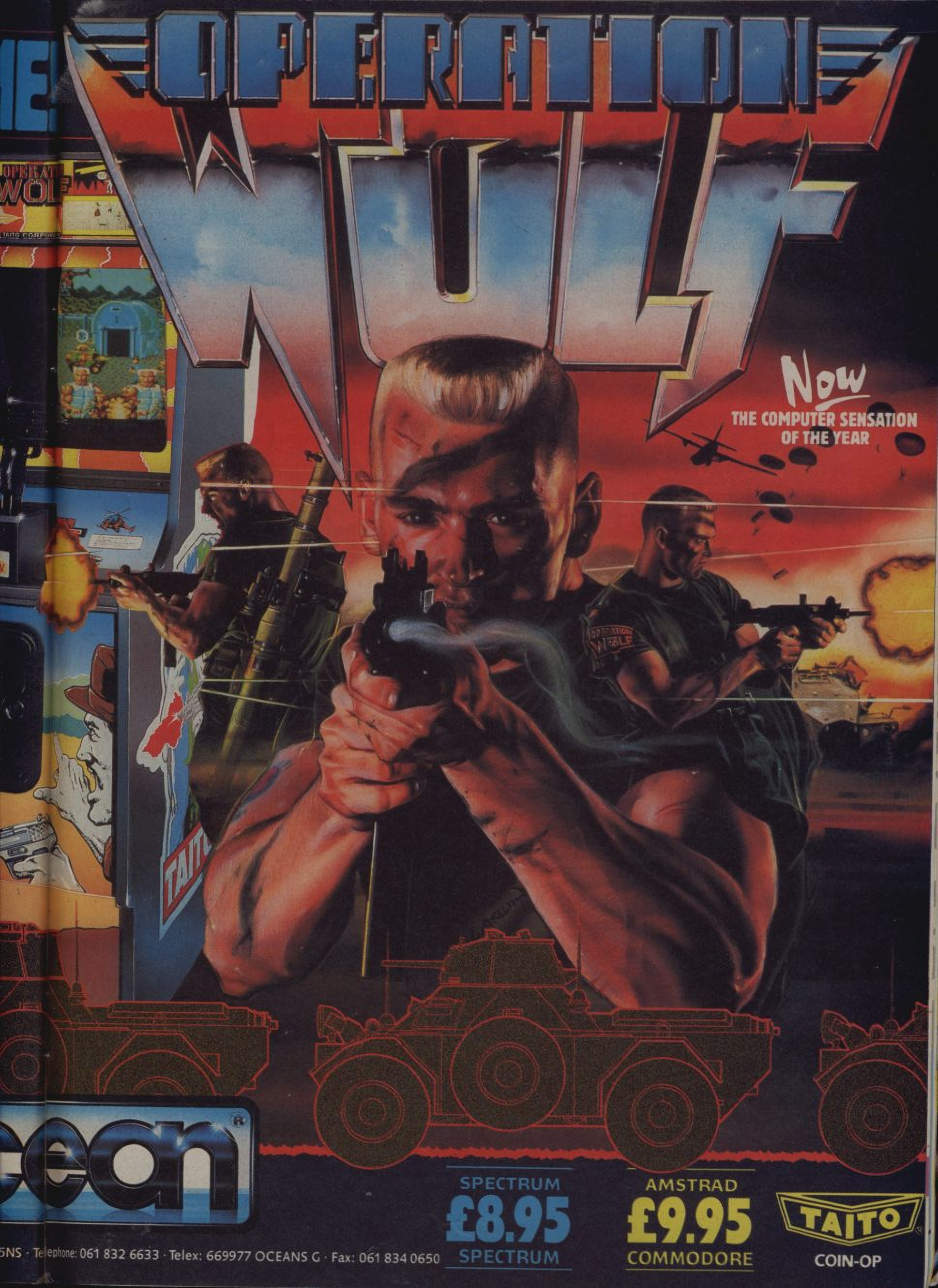


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Golden

JOYSTICK AWARDS 88

It's that Golden Joystick time of year again. Voting is now open for Europe's most prestigious computer game awards. Golden Joysticks is entering its sixth proud year. In the time we have been running the awards each year has seen a large growth in the number of votes cast by you — the C+VG readers. It's the reader poll that makes our awards the special ones. No arbitrary panels, no reviewers sticking their noses in. The games that win our prizes are the ones you vote for. Plain and simple.

This year we are expanding the awards by inviting our sister magazines in the Emap group (our publishers) to extend the voting to their readers. Voting forms will also be appearing in Sinclair User, Commodore User and The One.

The game categories are as follows: Software House of the Year, Game of the Year, Adventure of the Year, Arcade Game of the Year, Strategy Game of the Year, Role Playing Game of the Year, Programmer of the Year, Best Original Game, Best Coin-op Conversion, Best Graphics (16 bit), Best Graphics (8 bit), Best Soundtrack (16 bit), Best Soundtrack (8 bit), Best Simulation.

In addition there are four machine specific awards sponsored by individual magaiznes. These are the C+VG Console Game of the Year, the Commodore User Amiga Game of the Year, the Sinclair User Spectrum Game of the Year, and The One Atari ST Game of the Year.

Get your votes in now. We have ten C+VG 'Stonking Good Read' T Shirts to give away to ten lucky voters who are drawn out of our mail bag. Vote now.

Best Coin-op Conversion..

Runner-Up..

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Runner-Up..

Arcade Game of the Year..

Runner-Up..

Best Adventure Game..

Runner-Up..

Best Original Game..

Runner-Up..

Best Graphics (8-bit)..

Runner-Up..

Best Graphics (16-bit)..

Runner-Up..

Best Soundtrack (8-bit)..

Runner-Up..

Best Soundtrack (16-bit)..

Runner-Up..

Programmer of the Year..

Runner-Up..

Best Role Playing Game..

Runner-Up..

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Runner-Up..

Best Simulation..

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From The C+VG Posse

Mean Machines



▲ *Huge arcade adventure.*

Castlevania

► **MACHINE: NINTENDO.**
► **PRICE: £29.95.**
► **REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.**

Some evil count is terrorising the neighbourhood, and the only thing that can stop him having his wicked way with all the local girlies is you – a Professor Van Helsing type.

The action begins with the hero entering the count's castle: a grimmer and more forebording place you couldn't possibly imagine. The castle has many, many rooms, each of which is comprised of stairs, ladders and platforms. As the hero progresses through the castle the screen scrolls vertically and horizontally – depending on which way he's travelling.

The count's minions infest the castle, and attack the intruder on sight, attempting to wear away his energy bar. If the bar is depleted entirely, one of his three lives is lost. Fortunately the hero is armed with a whip which kills monsters with one well-aimed lash. Extra weapons can be picked up by collecting the icons dropped occasionally by dying minions, or by bashing parts of the castle walls and uncovering secret caches of goodies.

Collecting extra weapons is vital to the mission – on later screens the enemies get tougher and more aggressive. Useful stuff includes axes, a dagger, fire bombs, boomerangs and morning stars. There are also items which increase firepower, restore health and destroy every creature on-screen.

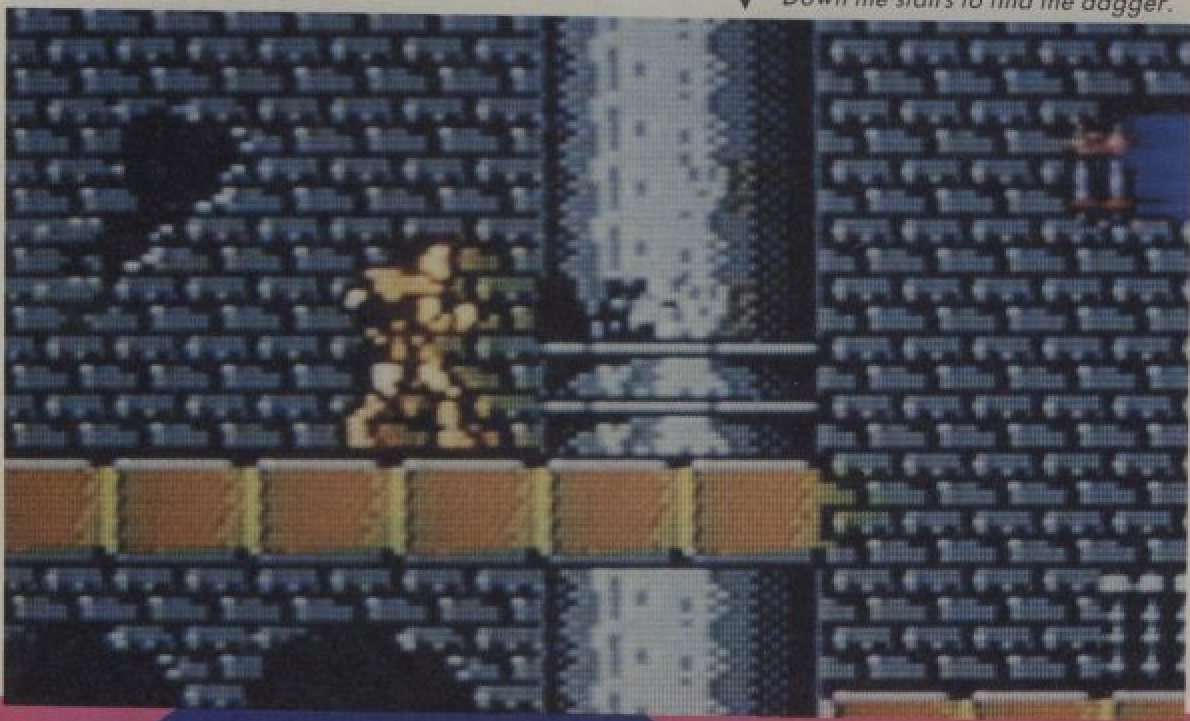
On the final screen is the count himself, and he must be defeated in a final showdown to complete the game – but he's very tough and you need to have the correct weapons to destroy him.

Although Castlevania doesn't look particularly attractive – the colours are a little muddy, and some of the sprites lack definition – it plays extremely well. The difficultly is nicely graded, letting you progress a little further with every game, and there's also a continue option for those who enjoy keeping at it.

The castle is certainly large (how about sending me a map?), and there are a wealth of extra weapons to experiment with. To be honest, I think that Castlevania is overpriced – especially when compared with Sega's average price of around £20 – but you do get plenty of game for your money, and it's both challenging and highly enjoyable.

Recommended for those who enjoy a good arcade adventure.

▼ *Down the stairs to find the dagger.*



NINTENDO

► GRAPHICS 71%
► SOUND 79%
► VALUE 48%
► PLAYABILITY 88%
► **OVERALL 81%**

Mean Machines

What a month! There's Metroid tips for Nintendo owners, and reviews of Shanghai and Great Baseball on the Sega, and Top Gun and Castlevania on the Nintendo, as well as news on new Nintendo and PC Engine titles. Best of all is our exclusive report from Japan – four pages of the hottest news from the land of the rising console.

Shanghai

► MACHINE: SEGA.
► PRICE: £22.95.
► REVIEWER: JULIAN RIGNALL.

Shanghai isn't new on computers – Activision released it a couple of years ago on various formats – and now it's arrived on the Sega. It's based on the old oriental board game Mah Jongg. There are 144 tiles arranged in a pyramid and the objective is to remove matching pairs from the pile. This is more difficult than it sounds since it's only possible to remove them all in 72 consecutive moves. And removing the wrong tiles means that you're left in situation where there are no matching pairs left. It sounds odd, but in practice it's quite straightforward.

The rule that makes the game difficult to complete is that tiles can only be removed by sliding them off the pile either to the left or right if there aren't any other tiles blocking them in. There are four types of each tile, so selective removal is necessary so you don't end up blocking pairs in.

▼ *Shanghai: not exactly exciting.*



The Sega interpretation of this strange game is viewed from above. A joycard-controlled cursor is used to highlight tiles, and fire either unhighlights them or removes them from play. If the move is illegal a beep sounds and the player has to select new tiles.

There are three types of game: solitaire, tournament and challenge. Solitaire is straightforward: just remove all the tiles from the board. Tournament is a multi-player game where the players take turns to remove tiles from the board – the player with the most tiles at the end of a game is declared the winner. Finally, challenge is played by two participants, and the objective is to remove as many tiles as possible.

During play a drop-down menu can be accessed to identify a tile, back up a move, request the computer to show all moves available – a help option in other words, peek at tiles underneath (which

▼ *What's that then?*



is cheating) and change the background music (there are two awful tines and one which is listenable).

I found it difficult to get excited about *Shanghai*. The presentation and graphics are great, and the game itself is quite therapeutic – it certainly makes a change from blasting aliens – but in the end it all gets rather tedious. I'm all for unusual adaptations of board games, but I'm afraid this one doesn't make a particularly thrilling or addictive computer game.

SEGA

► GRAPHICS	69%
► SOUND	52%
► VALUE	32%
► PLAYABILITY	47%
► **OVERALL**	**48%**



▲ *The title screen.*

Great Baseball

► **MACHINE: SEGA.**
► **PRICE: £22.95.**
► **REVIEWER: MATT BIELBY.**

Channel Four hasn't devoted quite as much time to baseball as it has American Football, so I guess a fair number of you out there are as ignorant of the rule intricacies as I am. Good job then that Sega's baseball game is playable enough to be fun on first loading whether you've bothered to read the (skimpy) rule book or not.

Great Baseball does its best to recreate the game as well as possible. You can choose to play the computer or a human opponent over several levels of difficulty, and can pick "real" league teams and to some extent modify their abilities. You can choose, for instance a pitcher, stamina levels and whether their speciality is to be slider, knuckleball or something equally unsavoury-sounding. Certainly no concessions are made to aid the understanding of us dumb Brits.

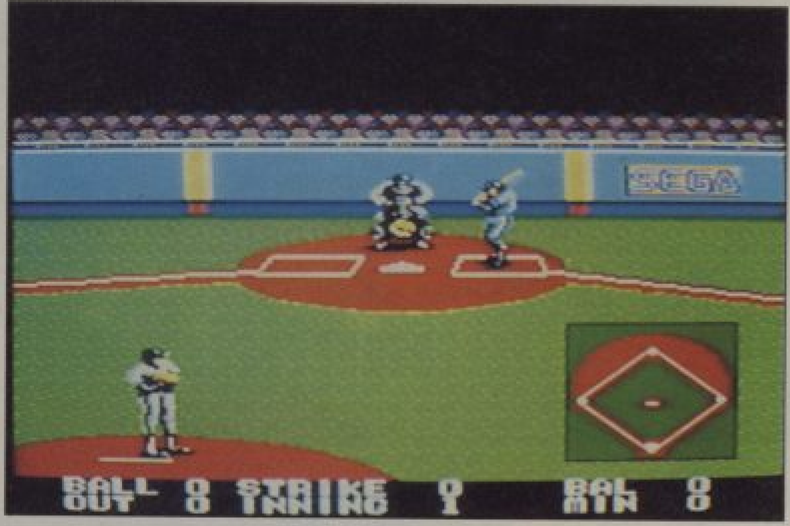
With your keypad and buttons you can now bat, field, pitch, run between bases and all the other business of the game, with the scene sometimes switching to the scoreboard, or to another infuriating longshot as the computer player hits yet another perfect home run. Certainly for a beginner, it would be wise to start of with your fielders set to run for a catch automatically, rather than having to worry about controlling them too.

There is a lot more complicated business too – you are able to bring on a relief pitcher should your current one be flagging (a very wise move) and you can take part in a special home run contest sub-game (to see how many boundary hits you can make out of 20 perfect pitches in a row). Should you make a homer the crowd go wild, doing a sort of Mexican wave.

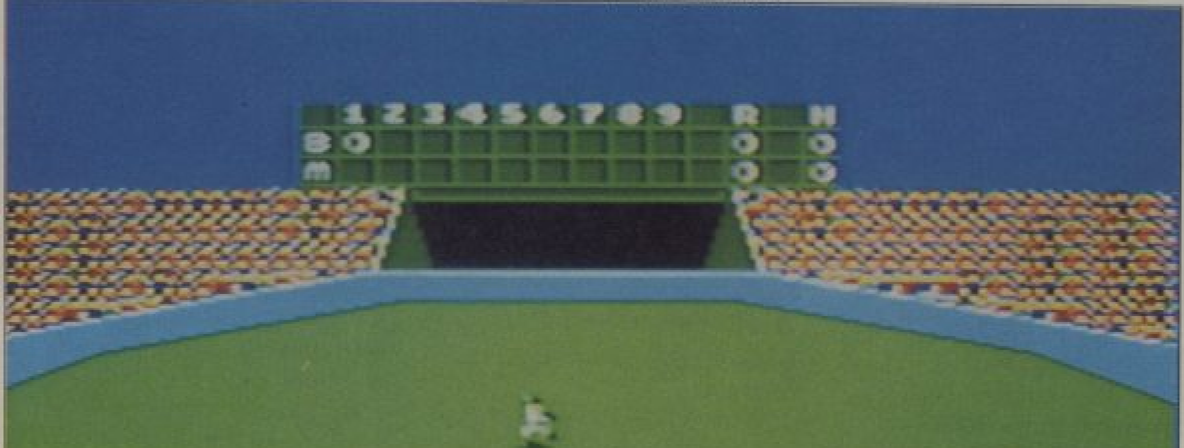
Sound, graphics and animation are up to the general high, clean standards of Sega games. There are really very few ways to fault it except to say that the weaknesses of the video game are the same the weaknesses of the real thing. Baseball doesn't flow particularly well as a game in the same way that soccer does. There are too many stops and starts, and too much switching between playing pitcher, hitter and catcher for me, at any rate to get fully into the idea of playing the game. Instead it's more like taking a passive, distant role watching the little men on the field play the game.

Still, if you're into baseball, you'll no doubt be very, very pleased with it.

▼ *Pitch!*



▼ *Is it a homer?*

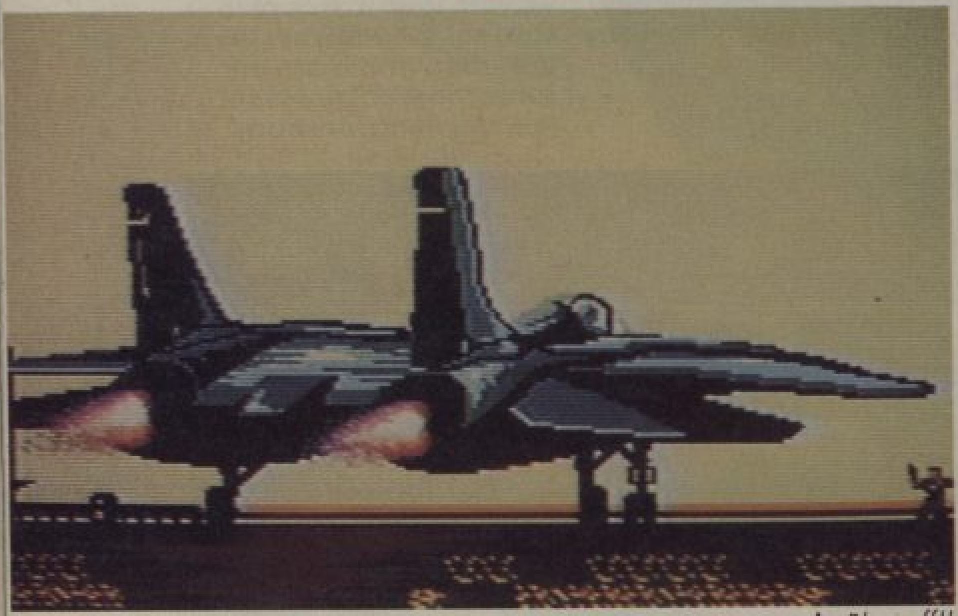


SEGA

► **GRAPHICS**	**75%**
► SOUND	69%
► VALUE	72%
► PLAYABILITY	64%
► **OVERALL**	**76%**

Mean Machines

Top Gun


▲ *Blast off!!*

► MACHINE: NINTENDO.
► PRICE: £29.95.
► REVIEWER: EUGENE LACEY.

Top Gun will really take your breath away (well – why go for an original intro when a clichéd one is staring you in the face).

It's based on the gung-ho flyer's film in which Tom Cruise and his mates down squadrons of Russkie Migs in their F14's and Kelly McGillis looks stunning, though slightly less than convincing as a fighter plane expert.

Still – you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy this excellent flight game.

Having played quite a few flight sim games on home computer I was immediately struck by the level of sophistication that the designers have achieved using the four key pad buttons that are available to them on the Nintendo key pad.

This is very different to the home computer versions which often use just about every key on the computer to implement all sorts of moves.

There is no loss of gameplay – in fact if anything the gameplay is improved as the designers have concentrated on flying and fighting rather than reproducing all the dials and buttons of the real thing.

There are four levels of play. Combat level one is for beginners – take to the sky and start mixing with the Migs. This will enable you to get to grips with the flight controls and practice using your cannon and heat seeking missiles.

Combat level two is a real battle challenge. Enemy Migs are taking off from the Russian Carrier Minsk, and submarines are tracking you from just below the surface of the ocean: your mission is dodge the flak, down as many Migs as you can, reach the Minsk and sink her.

Combat level three is an air battle over land. Your mission is to penetrate the enemy fortress. But before you can do this you must first avoid guided missiles and out manoeuvre low-level attack choppers, before blasting the defences of the fortress.

With a huge stretch of the imagination level four takes you into space in an attempt to destroy the enemy Killer Satellite – their key weapon in their plan for world domination.

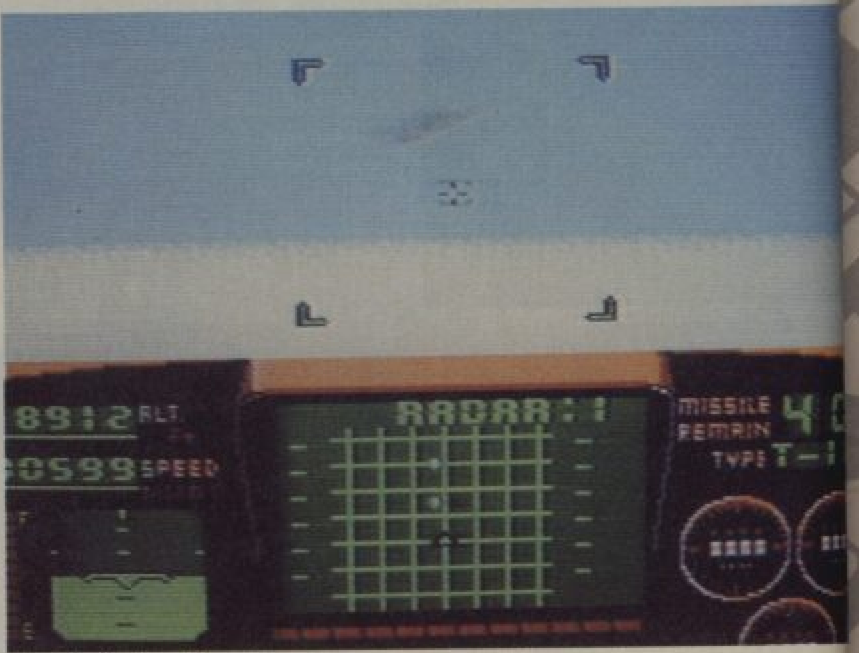
Plenty of cockpit information is available to you. There is an altimeter to tell you your altitude, fuel meter, air speed indicator, cannon and missile sight, artificial horizon to tell you the various angles and directions you are flying, a damage indicator and a multi-purpose display at the centre of the controls. Most of the time this display acts as a radar but it also gives you printed messages: warnings of enemy planes on your tail, height warnings if you are too high or too low when attempting to land or refuel.

Landing on to your own carrier and refuelling are two of the trickiest manoeuvres that you have to master. You certainly have to master these if you want to succeed in the four Top Gun missions.

One nice touch are the screen that come up if you fail to land properly – your F14 is seen crashing into the sea yards from the carrier.

Another good thing about *Top Gun* is you can just pick it up and start to play. Getting Migs in your sights blasting them with you cannon or even locking missiles onto them. At this level you can start enjoying the game seconds after you plug it in.

An excellent flight game addition to the Nintendo library of games.



▲ *Missile that Mig.*

NINTENDO

► GRAPHICS	82%
► SOUND	81%
► VALUE	55%
► PLAYABILITY	86%
► OVERALL	**82%**

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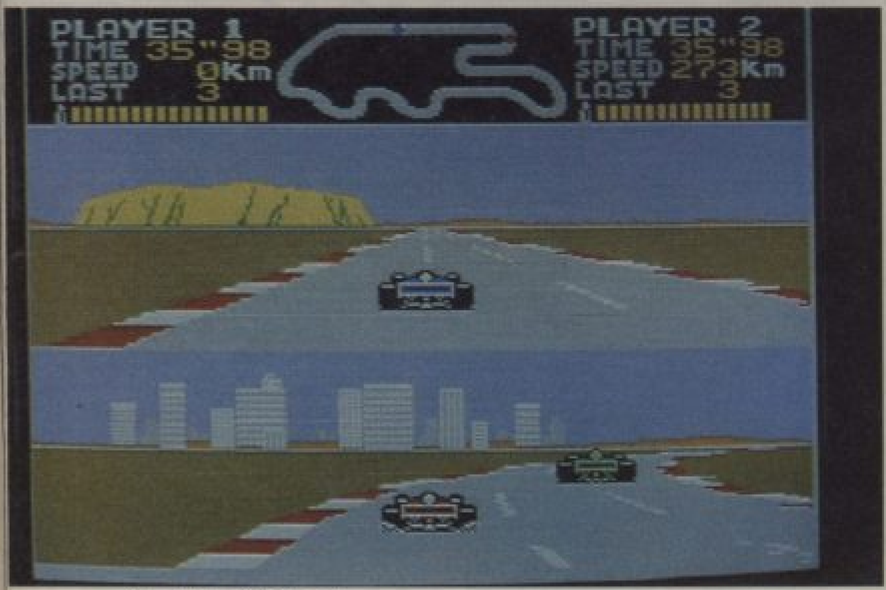
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Mario Update

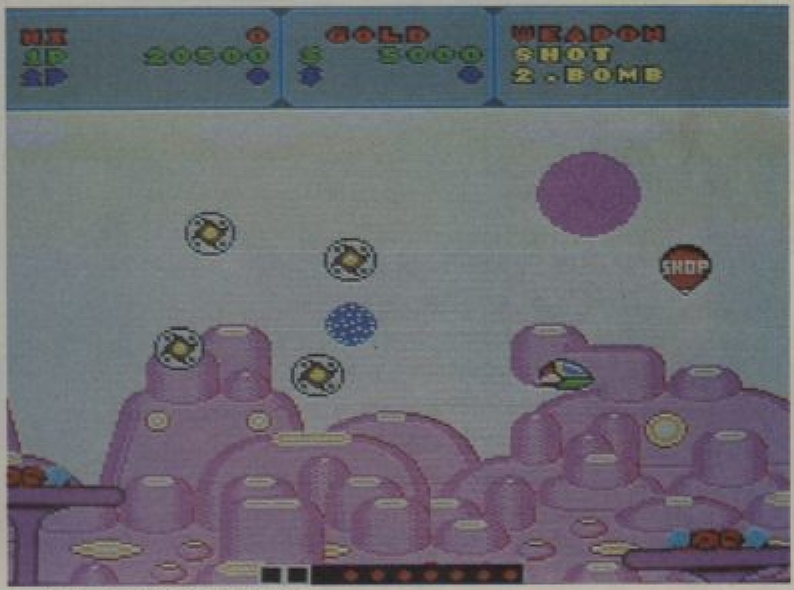
Super Mario Bros fans will be pleased to hear that the long-waited sequel (previewed a couple of issues ago) will be released in April – order early, it's bound to sell like hotcakes. When *Super Mario Bros III* will make an appearance is anyone's guess . . .



Rainbow Island (Bubble Bobble II).



Final Lap: Nintendo.



Nintendo Fantasy Zone.

More Engine Delights

Some impressive new titles have recently appeared on the PC Engine, one of the best being *Legendary Axe*. It's a *Rastan Saga*-type game and looks, sounds and plays better than many coin-ops! The soundtracks are absolutely superb and provide just the right atmosphere as the player guides an axe-wielding hero across the multi-directionally scrolling landscape. *Legendary Axe* once again shows the massive potential of the PC Engine, and is currently one of C+VG's most-played games.

After many delays, *Space Harrier* has at last been released. The result is pretty predictable – it's the best version you can play outside of an arcade! The graphics and sound are just about spot-on, and the gameplay is brilliant.

The minor arcade hit *Wardner* is another new PC Engine title, and again is utterly superb: there is absolutely no difference between it and the arcade version.

There's also an original game with an untranslatable name. It looks like *Space Harrier* crossed with a martial arts game, with a sword-brandishing hero flying over a 3D plane dispatching all manner of weird and wonderful creatures. The graphics look great – we'll bring you more details when we have them.

PC Engine Legendary Axe.



Nintendo Newies

Atari's superb *Final Lap* has just been translated to the Nintendo, and it looks very similar to the classic C64 game, *Pitstop II*. Split screens are used as two players battle head-to-head over a variety of tracks. It's a brilliant race game – let's hope Nintendo gets its skates on and releases the game over here.

Other goodies include *Rainbow Island (Bubble Bobble II)*, *Fantasy Zone*, *Konami '88*, *Vulcan Venture* (which looks brilliant) and *Alien Syndrome*. As usual, there'll be more information when we have it.


SEGA
TV ARCADE ACTION

LAND OF THE

After numerous rumours and rumblings, it seems that 1988 will, after all, be remembered as the year there was a serious Japanese attempt to launch games consoles in Blighty. This Christmas both Sega and Nintendo will be competing for sales of their own home based systems in British shops. But still there's no sign of the much-vaunted PC Engine, and in Japan the market is already looking towards the second generation of games machines. The recent Amusement Machines Show in Tokyo provided a valuable opportunity for catching up on developments in the country where it's all happening (or most of it, at any rate – Japan. Nick Kelly reports.



The average Westerner's conception of the land of the Rising Sun is of a nation of hard-working, technology mad folk, and, although like all racial stereotypes this image should be taken with a pinch of salt, there's a fair amount of truth to it. It's also an incredibly rich country, and Tokyo is undoubtedly the most expensive city in the world to visit.

But another, perhaps less well-publicised fact about the Japanese is that they're video-game mad! Whereas your average game player in this country is almost ashamed to admit that he's a regular visitor to an amusement arcade, in Tokyo coin-op arcades are perfectly respectable places where everybody from schoolboys to lawyers go to partake of the blasting arts. The arcades themselves are far more comfortable and well-maintained than their British equivalents, with seating in front of all of the cabinets. You can even buy soundtracks of your favourite video games on CD in the bigger record shops!

And perhaps it's this far less inhibited attitude to arcade blasting that has led to the popularity of the games console, as opposed to the home computer, in Japan. My theory is that British parents (who tend to do the lion's share of stumping-up when it comes to high-tech entertainment) tend to buy their offspring home computers as opposed to consoles because they fondly imagine that by buying their children computers they'll be contributing to their education whereas a games console is a just an expensive toy. The fact that – with some honorable exceptions – the home computers they buy are exclusively used for playing games doesn't seem to register, for some reason. Whereas in Japan everyone's totally at home with the idea of computers in their everyday lives anyway so they don't have any hang-ups about using high-tech equipment to provide them with their spare-time thrills.

So just what is on offer to Japanese console owners? Well, up until a couple of months back, the answer would have been straightforward enough. Three 8-bit game systems dominated the market; Nintendo's Famicom, the Sega System and NEC's

Fantazy Zone on the PC Engine.



RISING CONSOLE

▼ *Giraya: the PC Engine CD ROM game.*



PC Engine.

The company that claim the largest user base, and for whose machines the overwhelming majority of the games produced every year are intended is Nintendo. Their Family Computer System (Famicom for short) has sold something like 12 million units in Japan and there have been about 400 games produced for the system. Nintendo have been selling Famicom systems in Japan for some five years now, and about three years ago they also launched the system in the United States, and now have an impressive eleven million sales for their American system, the Nintendo Entertainment System.

This Christmas, they'll be hoping to add Britain to their success stories. The major secret of their achievements is price-related: in Japan and America they sell their machines for lower prices than any of their major competitors, thereby generating a large initial user base, which in turn leads to a huge number of games being manufacted for Famicom/NES machines, which attracts still more console buyers who are impressed by the numerical superiority of the Nintendo software base as well as the low price.

Ironically, however, this huge market share, and correspondingly large software base may be causing problems for Nintendo in Japan at least.

Mr Gushi of Hudsonsoft, a major Japanese Software manufacturer, says that while Nintendo's massive user base represents something like 90% of the market in theory, many of these machines are mouldering away in the back of Japanese cupboards.

"We can say this because we know the sales of our own software. We used to sell 600,000 units easily for the Nintendo, but nowadays 300,000 is about the maximum we can do, no matter how much we invest in advertising and promotion."

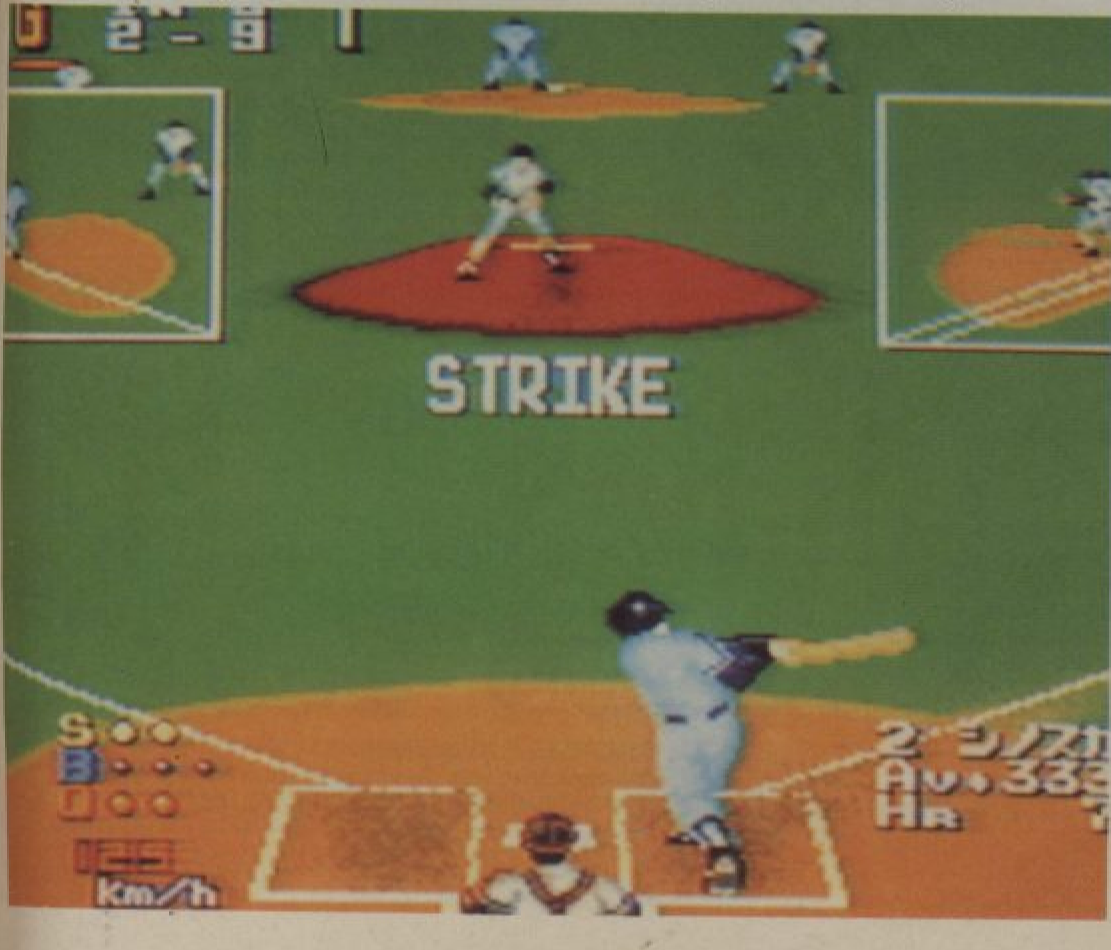
The problem, it seems, is a combination of the machine's own technical limitations and the huge amount of unoriginal, clone-type games which have been produced for it.

"Each new piece of software is fairly similar to something that's gone before. And it seems to me that the engineers at all the software houses have mastered the capabilities of the Famicom's technology and are using the system's technology to its full extent, so that even if they come up with a better idea, they still can't express that idea with the Famicom. That's certainly been our own engineers' experience."

Even Nintendo themselves agree that their system, at least as far as the Japanese market is concerned, has run into problems of late. According to Howard Phillips of Nintendo, "the software isn't as fresh and new as it could be, there's a lot of repetition and not a lot of new, original games. To some extent the engineers could be said to have exhausted the system."

As against this, however, Phillips points to the huge growth in popularity of role playing games in Japan, as exemplified by the unprecedented success of the *Dragon Quest* series. This role playing monster, now in its third incarnation sold a whopping 3 million copies.

▼ *PC Engine baseball.*



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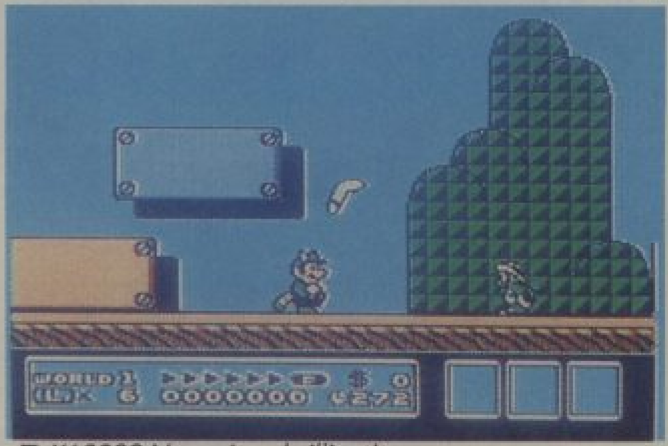
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LAND OF THE RISING CONSOLE



► Mario III on the Nintendo.

But, as Hudsonsoft's Mr Gushi points out, "this is unusual, it's a phenomenon". He reckons that in terms of regular users, Nintendo's market share may have fallen by as much as half.

So what does the Hudsonsoft spokesman think is taking up the slack? The answer, according to Gushi, is the PC Engine. Then again, he would do – one little-known fact about Hudsonsoft is that as well as writing software for a range of machines, their software engineers were actually responsible for developing the LSI chip which powers NEC's sophisticated games machine. Apparently, this unusual situation came about because NEC approached Hudsonsoft to discover what kind of machine they should produce which would be the best from a game engineer's point of view, and Hudsonsoft themselves decided to produce – for NEC – the LSI chip.

Most people who've seen games like *R – Type* on the PC Engine will be surprised to learn that the LSI chips are in fact just 8-bit. The arcade-standard graphics and gameplay are a testament to the skills of Hudsonsoft and NEC.

There are just about one million units of this impressive machine sold in Japan to date, but Gushi expects this figure to grow.

"We're now selling about 300,000 units of good software for the PC Engine", he says, adding that his feeling is that many former Nintendo owners will have already made, or are now contemplating making, the move up to PC Engine.

▼ X68000 Nemesis – brilliant!



▼ Salamander X68000 style.



▼ Space Harrier on the X68000.



Are there any drawbacks with this wondermachine? Well, for one thing, there's the price. It's a lot more expensive than either the Famicom or the Sega in Japan. There's also the fact that though the quality of the games that already exist, like *R-Type (I & II)* and Namco's brilliant PC Engine Tennis, is incredibly high, the numbers of games currently on release is a mere 16 at the time of writing, though that figure is obviously growing monthly. More seriously, from a British point of view, however, NEC haven't made any announcements regarding possible release dates in this country. And if indeed they do have any plans to bring the machine in here in the near future, they're keeping quiet about it.

The third point in the gaming triangle is Sega's console. With a roughly similar spec to the Famicom, a slightly higher price tag, fraction of the user base (an estimated 5% of the total) and far less software available, its appeal would initially seem slimmer both for seekers of quantity (Nintendo definitely wins by a mile) or quality (PC Engine ditto). However Sega do have a couple of major plusses which keep them in contention. For one thing, while lacking the economic and market share muscle to deny Nintendo access to most other major coin-op companies' products for conversion, they do, of course, have exclusive access to the wares of their parent company Sega. When you consider their dominance of the arcades with the likes of *Out Run, Thunderblade, Afterburner* and *Power Drift,* this is a fairl major advantage; basically, if you want to play any of Sega's products at home at console-standard, you'll have to get the Sega system.

And secondly, at least as far as British gamers are concerned, they've initially succeeded in getting into the game ahead of the rest in this country. They've been on sale in British stores for over a year with their distribution, promotions and licensing being handled through the Virgin/Mastertronic organisation.

But even as Sega and Nintendo bring their 8-bit machines to our attention for the first time, they're already beavering away at 16-bit super machines which will almost certainly

LAND OF THE RISING CONSOLE



▸ *The new 16-bit Sega.*

have the effect of making the present range of consoles – spanking new innovations that they may be in our eyes – decidedly old hat.

Sega have already launched their 16-bit Super system in Japan, showcasing arcade-level versions of the likes of *Altered Beast* and *Thunderblade*. And, according to a recent announcement from Nintendo's headquarters, they have commenced work on a 16-bit SuperFamicom.

Sega's 16 bit machine looks like the one that we might see over here first, as (a) it's complete and on sale in Japan now, and (b) Sega are already well-established this country with their 8-bit system.

Nevertheless, Sega wasn't prepared to put any date on the British release of their 16-bit baby: "no decision has been made as to whether or when we might release the machine in Europe."

Nintendo are taking things far, far slower. Although they have definitely committed themselves to producing a 16-bit machine, it isn't likely to appear for quite some time, and we'll be lucky if we see it in the next three years. Part of Nintendo's whole philosophy of going 16-bit is not to spurn their existing customers; hence, according to Nintendo spokesman Howard Phillips, "the new 16-bit machine will be compatible with the existing 8-bit Nintendo software."

This may well be a canny move. Nintendo's extremely successful approach to date has been to produce cheaper than the competition, thus generating a wider user base and software base. Having your new machine able to run hundreds of already existing games will be a big attraction.

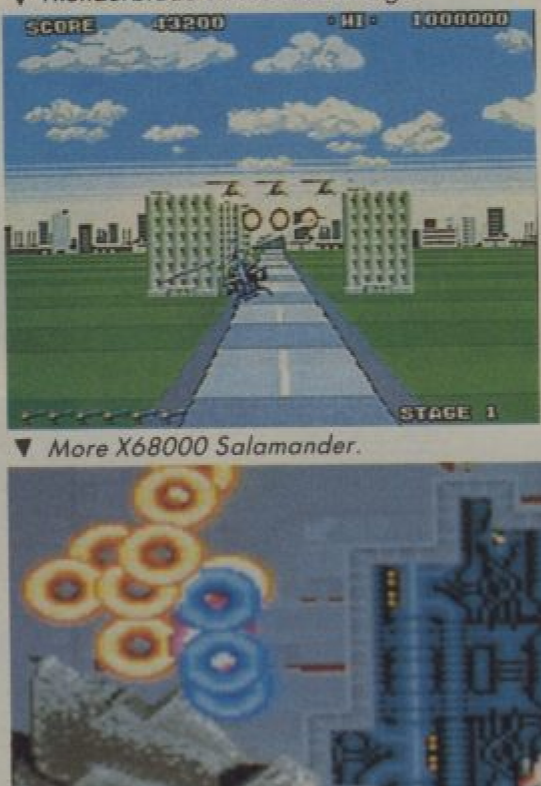
NEC ave, according to Hudsonsoft's Mr Gushi, no immediate plans to introduce a 16-bit PC engine (apart from anything else, their 8-bit version is already arguably able to deliver coin-op standard graphics anyway), but they have just launched an extraorindary add-on to the basic machine which will, they say, open up a world of extra possibilities.

And NEC's use of new technology may indeed prove a far more marketable approach in these parts than bringing out a 16-bit PC Engine – would assuming, first of all that they manage to get the 8-bit version into the shops. NEC's big new innovation is the CD-ROM add-on, previewed in the recent Tokyo Electronics Exhibition. This device takes the form of a CD player which can interface with the PC Engine – as well as hooking into an ordinary hi-fi system. This allows a huge amount of extra memory to be accessed by the machine, with extraordinary results in the graphics and sound departments.

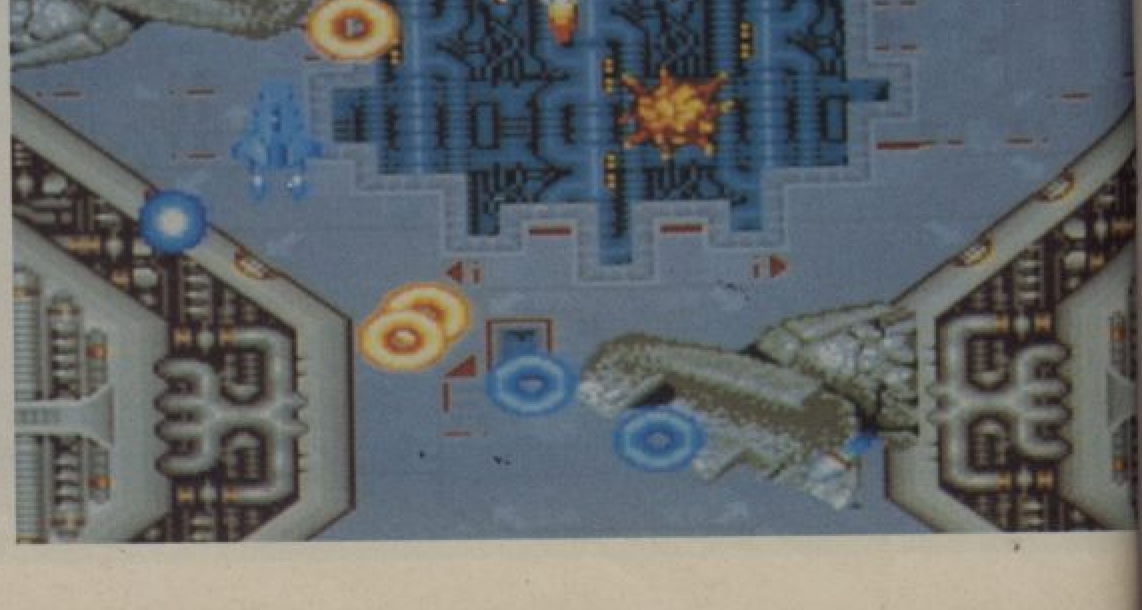
"Right now most of the games machines have a memory of around 2 Megabytes. CD-ROM can hold something like 548 MegaBytes, about 250 times the memory capacity of other machines! This means you can, for instance have CD quality orchestral soundtracks for the games."

Hudsonsoft have already started developing games like *Street Fighter* for the CD-ROM attachment. The huge attraction that the CD-ROM add-on

▾ *Thunderblade on the 16-bit Sega.*



▾ *More X68000 Salamander.*



might have in this country is that you can also use it as an ordinary CD player and link it into your stereo, thereby enabling games-loving music lovers to upgrade two parts of the entertainment systems simultaneously. (In Japan where a whopping 83% of the population already own CDs, this isn't quite such a major selling pint).

Apart from all these developments and promised developments from Tokyo, there are also a couple of other, local entrants in the great console handicap. Atari have recently announced that they hope to launch a very competitively priced console, the ST Plus, next Spring, a sixteen-bit console largely based on the ST home computer. Joystick manufacturers Konix are also likely to be bringing out a fairly impressive looking three- games system which will inclu- sit-down steering-wheel.

There seems to be no doubt that the games console is about to make a big impact here over the next to 12 to 18 months. But, before you all throw away your keyboards and saddle up for the console age, you may be interested to hear that in Tokyo the hippest young game players are actually selling their consoles and saving up to buy a home computer instead, the extraordinary Sharp X68000, which promises incredible sound and graphics as well as all the attributes of a seriously powerful computer. Only trouble is, the X68000 currently retails, in Japan, at about £1,500. In real life, as a wise man once said, there's no Sanity Clause . . .



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▲ *Wicked Gary, Cinder-Lora, and Prince Barrington – in a C+VG Panto.*

Or fifteen. Or look, this is the season of giving, John, so make it twenty and have done with it. And in exchange the Santas of the software industry will flog you tie-ins, rush jobs and even the odd game you *will* still be playing after Boxing Day. Ho, Ho, Ho to one and all!

Once again the Festering Season is with us and I say 'Hah, bumhug!' in my best, Scrooge-you-too tones because the only way to get something festive out of a computer is to de-tune your telly to the atmospheric look like snow. I'm dreaming of a White Christmas because the blood from shoot 'em ups looks better that way. That's not the tinkle of Jingle Bells – it's the sound of Slay Bells as the cash registers ring up yet more bloody purchases.

And so it is, in this spirit of 'Peace on earth,' we libellously present the first annual Out To Lunch Panto. All the facts are real, only the names have been changed so we don't get sued.

Scene: A cold, dark office on Christmas Eve. At a desk a solitary figure diligently works. It is Cinder-Lora, valiantly struggling to prepare the next issue of C+VG while everyone else is down the pub. But every time she tries to join them another delivery of 'blockbuster Christmas titles' arrives. Softly she sobs to herself: ''If only I was invited to the In-Din.''

(Author's note: The In-Din is the annual gathering of computing bods to eat, drink and get embarrassingly merry – burrupp!)

At this very moment, in zips Buttons – there ain't no flies on him! ''Never mind,'' he tells Cinders: ''We can make our own fun, here in front of the fire.'' (Yo, ho, ho!) ''Butt off, Buttons!'' our overworked heroine responds. Disconsolately Buttons sets to work writing the next Out to Lunch-oooh-worra-giveaway!

Cut to the Santa's Software Workshop where a chubby S. Claws pauses only to goose a female gnome and imbibe another glass of best malt. ''How many more hours to Christmas?'' he growls.

''Ten,'' comes the reply. ''Good. Time to grind out another dozen titles then.'' His eyes glaze over. ''Has anybody ever adapted the true story of Christmas?'' he asks.

A hush falls over the gnomes. Santa seems to glow with sanctity – though it could equally be Chernobyl fallout or an excess of expensive Scotch. A tear glistens in his eye. ''The baby Jesus born in a stable. The cattle are lowing – digitised, of course – the Baby awakes . . . But Herod is massacring all newborn children. Mary and Joseph only have an Uzi to defend themselves. Got it?''

Meanwhile, back in the C+VG office, the Ugly Giana Sisters enter . . . then exit again because two Italian Brothers claim infringement of copyright – and you don't mess with de mob. This leaves only the Wicked Advertisement Manager who rolls in from the City Pride to park his lunch in the porcelain bowl before breezing off to the In-Din.

''Oh sweet, kind and gentle Gary,'' says Cinder-Lora (see – we said she'd been working too hard!); ''May I go to the In-Din too?'' The Step-muthah breaks off from delicately picking diced carrot and tomato skins from his dinner jacket to stare at the lowly wench. ''No. There's an issue to get out,'' he snarls.

Cinder-Lora is in tears when she notices the handsome stranger by her desk. ''Why are you crying?'' he asks. ''Because I can't go to the In-Din,'' she replies. ''Oh, I can fix that,'' the stranger grins. ''As sure as my name's Rod the God.'' Suddenly Cinder-Lora finds her rags replaced by a pair of purple, crushed velvet flares, the office C5 has turned into a red Porsche and Buttons looks like Tom Hanks . . . Well, two out of three ain't bad.

The dinner itself is a crazy affair. Wild Bill Stealey arrives late because he can't find anywhere to park his T-28 jet trainer. Ocean software announces that the Stallone sprite in their *Rambo III* game has been nominated for an Oscar because it's a better actor than Sly himself. Even a couple of programmers attend – but none of the software magnates recognise them.

''Who invited the haystack, Darling?'' Cinder-Lora asks. ''That's no haystack,'' the passing member of the Codemasters clan replies. ''That's Simon Hairy, the Charming Prince-fan.'' Suddenly Simon is by Cinder-Lora's side. His voluminous locks brush her blushing cheek (Barbara Cartland) as he whispers in her ear: ''Woo-arrgh, rawk 'n' roll, girlie. I'm going to be big Down Under soon.''

But before Cinder-Lora can quiz the handsome PR person about success in the Australian pop scene, the clock is striking twelve. Remembering what Rod the God would have told her if we hadn't rushed through that bit, she flees the gathering before her clothes turn back to official C+VG sackcloth, leaving only a bright green Converse Hi-Top as a momento.

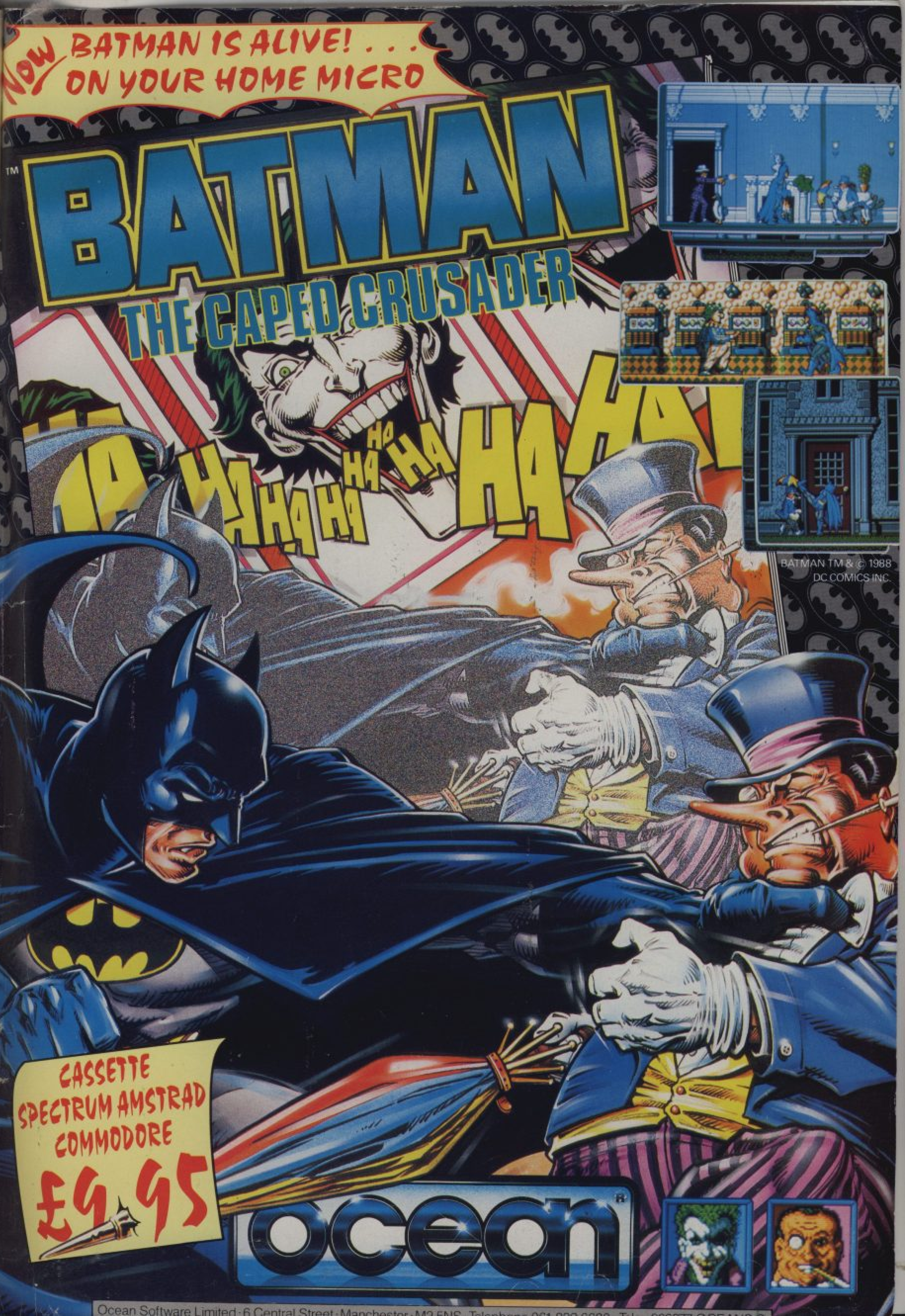
For months Prince Barrington hunts high and low for his long lost love. He fights many dragons, defies pirates, battles armies of the undead . . . (Get on with it, we're near the bottom of the page. – Ed). And finally he walks a hundred yards from his office to demonstrate a new game to C+VG where who should he find but . . .?

''You're only wearing one shoe?'' he observes. ''I can't afford two on my salary,'' the sweet young beauty shyly replies. ''Then try this on,'' says Charming, trying it on himself. A hush fills the office as he pulls the Hi-Top from his pocket. Slowly he ties the lace. The sun bursts through the clouds. Birds sing. Bells ring.

''And now we can marry,'' the Prince smiles. ''Well, I'm not sure about that,'' says Buttons, hobbling around in the ill-fitting Hi-Top. But Barrington won't take no for an answer. The nuptials are arrnaged and the two go on honeymoon leaving Cinder-Lora to lead her own life. Within two years she has raised an army to overthrow the tyrranical rulers of C+VG. Under her editorship it features pin-ups of hunky film stars and fashion hints. Its circulation quadruples and everybody lived happily ever after . . .

Or do they? These are warped and ugly times we live in. The craziness will just get worse unless *you* do something about it . . . and the answer may just lie hidden in this story.

But then again, it may not. So have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



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